

# THE THINKER

Volume 8

January - June 2023



**RESURGENCE OF THE LATIN  
AMERICAN LEFT: RIGHT STEPS  
OR LEFT BEHIND?**

Page 14

**STEPS TAKEN TO PREVENT A  
REPEAT OF THE 2020 GENERAL AND  
REGIONAL ELECTIONS FIASCO IN GUYANA**

Pg 24

**US FOREIGN POLICY AND  
ATTACKS ON CHINA**

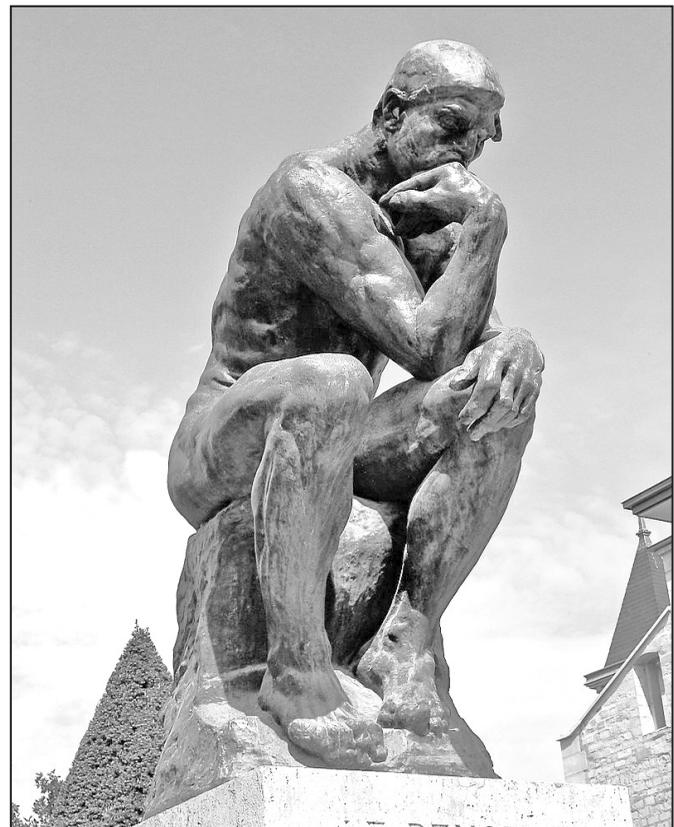
Page 31

**'RATHER DIE FREEMEN THAN LIVE AS SLAVES'  
IDEOLOGY AND CONTEXT  
THE 1763 BERBICE REBELLION**

Page 35

# Table of Contents

Editorial .....	ii	Lest we forget: the Cuban Missile ‘Scare’ April 1961 .....	48
Cheddi Jagan was on the Front Line of History .....	1	<i>Khame Sharma</i>	
<i>Clement J. Rohee</i>			
Identifying and Remedying the Root Causes of Political Conflicts in our Country .....	4		
<i>Norman Whittaker</i>			
On the precipice of Nuclear War: Russia/Ukraine conflict.....	5		
<i>Donald Ramotar</i>			
Paul Leroy Robeson: A Person Extraordinaire (1898- 1976) .....	10		
<i>Harry Narine Nawbatt</i>			
Resurgence of the Latin American Left: Right Steps or Left Behind? .....	14		
<i>Earl Bousquet</i>			
Reflections on those Difficult Years .....	20		
<i>Harry Narine Nawbatt</i>			
Steps taken to prevent a repeat of the 2020 General and Regional Elections Fiasco in Guyana .....	24		
<i>Ganga Persaud</i>			
The 1953 PPP Government .....	28		
<i>Hydar Ally</i>			
US Foreign Policy and Attacks on China.....	31		
<i>Donald Ramotar</i>			
‘Rather Die Freeman Than Live As Slaves’ Ideology And Context The 1763 Berbice Rebellion.....	35		
<i>James Rose</i>			
Cheddi and Janet: They Made Tremendous Sacrifices.....	46		
<i>Norman Whittaker</i>			



*The Thinker (French: Le Penseur) is a bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin.*

# EDITORIAL

This edition of The Thinker focuses on a number of landmark events both nationally and internationally.

Among the key issues highlighted in this issue is the birth and death anniversary of Dr. Cheddi Jagan and the death anniversary of Mrs. Jagan who also passed away during the month of March. Several commemorative events were held by the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre and the People's Progressive Party of which both were founder members.

This edition also coincided with the 75th anniversary of the victory of the PPP in the historic April 1953 elections, the first to be held under universal adult suffrage. The constitution was suspended after a mere 133 days in office and an interim administration installed by the colonial administration until fresh elections were held in 1957, again won by the PPP (Jaganite) by a landslide.

This period also marks a number of historical milestones including the 260th anniversary of the Berbice Slave Rebellion led by the indomitable Cuffy.

At the international level, the situation remains tense with still no end in sight regarding the war in Ukraine which has been dragging on for well over a year despite several peace initiatives by China, Brazil and the Vatican.

Several of the articles centre on these broad thematic areas. In keeping with editorial for balanced perspectives, the views expressed in these articles are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the views of the The Thinker Magazine.

We thank our subscribers and readers for their continuing interest in the magazine.

**Editorial Committee**  
**April 3, 2023**

---

## Editorial Committee

Frank Anthony  
Donald Ramotar  
Clement Rohee  
Hydar Ally  
Indranie Chandarpal

## Contact Information

65-67 High Street, Kingston,  
Georgetown, Guyana, South America  
Tel: (592) 223-7523/24  
Email: [thinkerjournal1@gmail.com](mailto:thinkerjournal1@gmail.com)

# Cheddi Jagan was on the Front Line of History



On the eve of the annual Babu Jaan rally organized by the PPP/C in honour of Cheddi Jagan, the PNC once again sought to besmirch the good name of the former democratically elected President of Guyana and deny him the honour, Father of the Nation.

The bee in the PNC's bonnet is the billboard mounted at Houston with a portrait of Cheddi Jagan proclaiming him 'Father of the Nation.' The PNC is livid about this billboard and the public message it conveys. They want it removed.

At a PNC press conference held on Thursday March 23, 2023, in the presence of Opposition Leader Mr. Aubrey Norton, Mr. Hamilton Green said; "As Elder, I call on the Leader of the PNC and Leader of the Opposition to respectfully ask that that sign be torn down."

Green went on to say; "I hope we get national support to remove that abomination, that obnoxious sign describing Jagan as 'Father of the Nation.'

And in answer to a question as who he (Green) thinks should be named 'Father of the Nation' his response was; "If there is someone that should be named 'Father of the Nation' it is Forbes Burnham."

This is not the first time spokespersons of the PNC have sought to stir controversy on this matter. But it is not so much the billboard that matters, it is the individual to

whom the title has been bestowed that bothers the PNC.

Mr. Green should be reminded about the controversy in the PNC whether Burnham should be considered Father of the Nation by his own Comrades having regard to internal disagreement among leaders of that Party on the subject.

It is to be recalled that in July 2012 at a lecture delivered to the then National Assembly's 'Governance and Democracy' lecture series, then Opposition Leader David Granger was reported as stating; "There is no father of the nation, there is no mother of the Nation. I think we have to unlearn this myth." A few days later, Aubrey Norton launched a scathing attack on Granger describing his statement as "strange and intellectually flawed."

So now thanks to Elder Green, Mr. Norton has scored a pyrrhic victory, that notwithstanding, both are in pursuit of an illusive dream that Burnham should be crowned 'Father of the Nation.'

Green's pronouncements should be viewed not just as another manifestation of the genre of speeches we hear these days from the political opposition, but a call to action for the tearing down the billboard must be condemned. It would be downright vandalism and is tantamount to a political provocation. It bears a close resemblance to Hannah Arendt's "Banality of evil."

The PNC seems not to have rid itself of the human impulse to hate, regrettably, it has developed a propensity to transform that impulse into action by its public pronouncements.

Recent pronouncements by leaders of the PNC and their political allies attest to the fact that they have not abandoned their bigoted and aggressive ways.

In the course of his ranting and raving during the press conference, Mr. Green conveniently overlooked the fact that nation building started way back in the late 1940's when Cheddi Jagan was elected to the Legislative Council after fighting a brilliant contest against John D'Aguiar a staunch supporter of colonial rule.

Jagan's entry to the Legco as it was then called, marked the beginning of a new era; the era of politics of protest and politics of exposure. Jagan had emerged as a national leader. The shooting to death of five sugar workers at Enmore in June of 1948 and the pledge he made at their burial solidified the emerging stature as Father of the Nation.

His call in April 1950 before the Waddington Commission for constitutional reform and internal self-government; His travels abroad to whip up solidarity and international support following the suspension of the constitution by the colonial power and his imprisonment by its local lackeys only helped to strengthen the popular view of him being Father of the Nation.

With Jagan at the helm, nation building continued with the victory of the PPP at the election in 1953 winning 18 out of 24 seats albeit in a government that did its level best, lasting just 133 days in office. Four years later, Jagan was returned to office as Premier of British Guiana from 1957 to 1964.

Green repeated Burnham's spurious claim that 'it was a mistake by Jagan not to issue a statement of loyalty to the new Queen for her coronation.'

In 'The West on Trial' Jagan wrote; 'Our decision not to send delegates to greet the Queen in Jamaica was probably our main sin of omission. That a Guyanese representative had gone to the Queen's Coronation ceremonies in London was enough.'

Mr. Green sought to rubbish Dr. Jagan's role as Father of the Nation by belittling his contributions to national development. Here are a few examples of actions that could be attributed to him as an emerging Father of the Nation.

The records show Jagan's fight in early 1948, eighteen years before independence, against an export tax of 30

cents per ton of bauxite in place of 1 1/2 percent tax on the value of bauxite exported. The budget debate in that matter gave Jagan the opportunity to expose the monopolies of bauxite-alumina by the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) the company's huge profits, its connections with the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan) and the Demerara Bauxite Company Ltd.(Demba) and the exploitation of countries such as British Guiana.

Secondly, there was a huge fight by Jagan concerning the purchase by the colonial government in 1951, fifteen years before independence, of 262 acres of land at Campbellville and 30 1/2 acres at LaPenitence which formed part of an estate owned by the Corentyne Sugar Estates Ltd; a Bookers subsidiary. The price paid was 96 times more than the purchase price in 1937. The company was thus in a position to earn from interest alone on the agreed price for part of the estate nearly three times what it was earning as income from its operations on the whole of the estate - Jagan described this as " a classic example of nationalization aiding the capitalist class."

Another example of Jagan's deep and abiding interest in securing the well being of Guianese was demonstrated in his fight for a comprehensive scheme of water control for drainage and irrigation. That pursuit resulted in the establishment of the Boerraserie Extension Project, designed to help farmers on the West Coast of Demerara and the East Bank of Essequibo; the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary and the Greater Canje Scheme.

Continuing his ossified account of history, Mr. Green claimed that Dr. Jagan "payed scant regard for Amerindians."

In November 1949, long before Mr. Green entered the political arena, Cheddi Jagan was in the Legco extending his full support to a motion on Amerindian Policy. He is on record stating; "I think the time is certainly ripe when we should give such protection as is necessary to the people who contributed so much to the early development of this Colony, and who can contribute more to its greater development." He referred to reports which revealed 'the experiences the Amerindian people had acquired in the industries of timber, balata, cattle rearing, gums, resins, wax, incense, medicinal barks, perfumes, dyes, poisons and nuts.'

Mr. Green gave an uninspiring version of historical events leading up to the granting of independence to British Guiana. He failed to mention that on November 1st, 1961, Cheddi Jagan, then Premier of British Guiana moved the following motion in the Legco; "Whereas it is the inherent right of all people to administer their own affairs and to determine their own destinies. And whereas it is the declared policy of Her Majesty's

Government to grant Independence to their subject people; And whereas Her Majesty's Government has accepted the principle of Independence for British Guiana; Be it resolved: That this Assembly request Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies to fix a date during 1962 when this country shall become fully independent within the Commonwealth of Nations."

In an effort to skip over the period during which Mr. Burnham attempted to seize control of the party resulting in the split in 1955, Mr. Green opted to refer to an international gathering that resulted in the formation of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). He then chose to extol the virtues of the four founder leaders of NAM claiming that Dr. Jagan paid no interest to the Movement while Burnham did so enthusiastically.

Mr. Green claimed erroneously that Dr. Jagan paid no interest in the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) but Mr. Green would have sat in the National Assembly during a debate on foreign policy in December 1971, when Dr. Jagan exposed the fallacy behind government's nonaligned policy. He condemned the PNC's policy of equidistance refusing to establish diplomatic relations with China, Cuba and the USSR as well as its refusal to recognize the new government in Vietnam while claiming it was socialist and nonaligned. "Do not tell us about nonalignment when you are aligned hand in glove with the United States of America; when you use words but your performance is something entirely different.

In his writings, many references can be found about tributes paid, and support Jagan extended to the Egyptian leader, Gamel Abdul Nasser's nationalization of the 1956 Suez Canal which resulted in the crisis instigated by the British who, for economic reasons opposed nationalization of the canal.

Following the death of Jawaharal Nehru on June 2, 1964, Cheddi Jagan moved a motion honoring Nehru in the Legislative Council. Nehru had extended his support to the PPP at the time when the constitution was suspended by Britain.

Dr Jagan is on record as having attended Ghana's independence celebrations in 1957 but more importantly, he sought the assistance of the Ghanaian leader to 'exert

pressure on Burnham to either reunite the party or join in a United front government.'

Nkrumah continued his efforts to assist in finding a political solution with the despatch of a Ghanaian mission to British Guiana. Green made no mention of this development and how his leader frustrated the efforts of the mission.

Mr. Green claimed that "Dr Jagan never explained why he was not part of the West Indian Federation."

Here is what Dr. Jagan said; "Let me say categorically. The views of the PPP I reflect have not changed. It still maintains that on the attainment by Federation of dominion status the issue of British Guiana's participation should be decided by a plebiscite. Full self government is a goal from which we will not deviate. Whether the people of British Guiana decide to join the Federation or not, full independence is something for which all Guianese must strive."

Editor, I believe it is important to rebuff the hidebound dilettantism expressed by those who have a penchant for either distorting or revising events in our country's history.

Cheddi Jagan lived on the front lines of history and his status as a freedom fighter on behalf of the Guyanese people can never be diminished by the ramblings of those who seek to deny his rightful place in our country's history as the Father of the Nation.



*Clement J. Rohee was the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Foreign Trade and then Minister of Home Affairs. Mr. Rohee is an Executive and Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive and was a former General Secretary. He is the President of the Guyana Peace Council.*

# Identifying and Remediating the Root Causes of Political Conflicts in our Country

All societies are faced with this issue of conflict. How we recognize and deal with these conflicts will be an important determinant of our success rate in identifying and remediating the root causes of the conflicts.

Conflict situations are highly volatile. What works today may not work tomorrow. Perhaps the greatest causes of public conflict in today's world are: feelings of alienation, displeasure with the manner in which scarce resources are allocated among the people, lack of accountability on the part of the Government for public funds and poor governance.

The PPP/C did undoubtedly recognize these causation factors and this must be an obvious reason why the Government, since October 1992 to May 2015 did continually focus on bringing the type of changes that would guarantee effective participation by citizens in legislative work, to facilitate and in order to influence the economic and social situation in our country. Undoubtedly also, the PPP/C recognized early enough that they could be no democracy in places where poverty, injustice, corruption, exclusion of a significant per cent of the nation's population are evident.

Consequentially, the participation of young people, women, indigenous people and indeed, suitably qualified people of all ethnicities, as one of the important measures/remedies that will strengthen the Parliament; make it more representative of our cultures, and therefore, more effective in helping to convert democracy from an ideal to an economic, social and political reality.

The Party and Government has obviously determined to use remedies of accommodation, collaboration and compromise to help address the major conflicts of our society. Already there is an air of optimism that is being felt and about which a significant number of the Guyanese people are happy.



Conflicts will always be with us. But to the extent that we are able to develop political institutions and instruments that facilitate the removal of social fragmentation, highlight and build on economic inadequacies, provide for checks and balances on public spending, improve the business environment, create opportunities for public consultation moreso involving minorities ... to that extent we would have helped to develop some mechanisms to remedy some of the root causes of conflict in our society

The Government's 2020 Elections Manifesto and its Budget 2020 certainly make the type of provisions that aim to take Guyana and its people in that direction where peace, progress and prosperity replaces conflicts in our Society.

The invitation is yet there for all Guyanese to come on board and be a part of the process and, I confidently say, a part of the progress.

May we practice the spirit of collaboration and togetherness



*Mr. Norman Whittaker is currently Deputy Chairman of Local Government Commission. He was former Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.*

# On the precipice of Nuclear War: Russia/Ukraine conflict



It is just over a year since Russia sent its troops on a special military operation in Ukraine. Immediately the Western mainstream media and official spokespersons took up the task of distorting the news and to prevent any other views/information from being heard or seen. Russia's media, RT and Sputnik, have been banned from broadcasting in any NATO countries. Some developing countries have followed suit due to fear of what the West can do to them. As the saying goes the first casualty of war is the truth. Russia's views and information are blocked from the Western public by these corporate media.

In this massive information blackout, the real reason for the tragedy has been obscured. That is why it is important to restate why the situation has reached this terrible state.

In the first place this occurred because the US broke its commitment not to move "one inch" to the East should the Soviet Union allow the reunification of Germany.

On the basis of that commitment Russia (then the Soviet Union) voluntarily withdrew all its troops from Eastern European countries.

In the middle of the 1990s the imperialist instincts of the US in particular began to kick in. Seeing that Russia was very weak economically the US, no doubt on the urging of the military industrial complex, decided to take advantage and to move NATO towards Russia. The whole intention was to prevent Russia from ever again being an obstacle to the US's military dominance of the whole world. That move created a very serious security problem for Russia. Recall how the US responded when the Soviet Union placed missiles in Cuba in 1962.

The US administration was warned that such a move would lead to conflict since Russia could not allow that. Ambassador Jack Matlock addressed the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate and issued that warning, he went so far as to tell the US administration and its congress that such a move could prove to be the worst mistake ever made by a US administration.

Ambassador Matlock also confirmed that this would be a betrayal of trust. In an article titled "I was there", Mr. Matlock confirmed that Russia was given the assurance that NATO would not expand beyond Germany.

Sound professional advice provided by Mr. Mattlock and others were promptly ignored. The US began to expand NATO. That by itself is a threat to Russia. It violated treaties signed which stated that no state would enhance its own security at the expense of another.

This brought forth angry protests from then Russia's President Yeltsin. He was promptly ignored. The US continued on its course even though no threat was posed to it or its allies' security.

When Mr. Putin became president, he continuously sought friendship and partnership with the West. He proposed a solution to the problem. He suggested that Russia be allowed to join NATO. That he reasoned would ensure lasting peace in Europe. His proposal and his hand of friendship were rejected.

This was a most clear manifestation of the attitude of the US and its NATO allies towards Russia. It became obvious that Russia was the target of US led expansion of NATO.

By 2007 when President Putin spoke frankly to NATO leaders in his famous speech in Germany weighing heavily on his mind must have been a) NATO/US rejection of Russia's offer to become a member of the alliance b) the NATO seventy eight days of bombing of Serbia and the forceful removal of Kosovo from Serbia.

In addition to the above it was in this period that the US unilaterally announced that it was withdrawing from the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT). Russia must have felt threatened seeing NATO bases closer and closer to it.

In 2014 when the US instigated coup occurred that removed the Ukrainian President who had a more favorable disposition to Russia it was clear that Ukraine would become a NATO outpost on the border of Russia. Ukraine had the infrastructure to manufacture nuclear weapons and strong weapons making factories. The US had invested heavily in labs that were experimenting/manufacturing chemical weapons.

However, Russia continued to strive for a peaceful solution. The Russian dominated area in eastern Ukraine, Donetsk and Ludansk rejected the 2014 Midan coup and announced the establishment of separate states.

Kiev's response was to begin military attacks on the breakaway states. Thousands died, mostly civilians, in the daily shelling of those areas by Ukrainian military forces from 2014 and is still continuing.

Still President Putin tried for a peaceful solution. Together with Germany and France he worked out

an agreement to give the breakaway provinces some amount of autonomy while remaining as a part of Ukraine. Yet today President Putin is being accused of having intentions to expand Russia to include the former Soviet States.

It is apposite to recall this in the light of Western anti-Russian propaganda which accuses President Putin of land grabbing.

Now, however, we know that the West/NATO had no intention of honoring the agreement known as the 'Minsk Accord'. In a recent interview former German Chancellor informed us that it was a mere tactical maneuver to give NATO more time to continue to arm Ukraine and prepare her for war against Russia. This was confirmed by former French president Holland, among others.

Added to these revelations is the recent admission of NATO's Secretary General that that organization was arming Ukraine and training its army to wage war with Russia. From a military standpoint Ukraine was a de facto NATO state threatening Russia and Russians living in Eastern Ukraine.

The west was negotiating in bad faith. Diplomacy was being used as an instrument of deception and a tool to stall while preparing to either attack Russia or to force Russia to take action to prevent Ukraine accessions into NATO.

Even when it must have appeared that the US and its allies were pushing for war, Russia tried its best to avoid it. In December of 2021 the Russians proposed to the US/NATO that Ukraine be designated a neutral country. The model it proposed was the Austrian model of neutrality that was in place since the end of the Second World War.

That was rejected by the West. Instead the Ukrainian regime intensified the bombing of Russians in Eastern Ukraine. Therefore, Russia had no option left. It then resorted to a "special military operation" to safeguard its people, including Russian people in Donetsk and Ludansk. That intended limited operation has escalated to an almost all out war not between Russia and Ukraine, but with NATO which is using this for a proxy war against Russia.

Since the beginning of Russia's special military operation things have become much clearer. Those who instigated this conflict have become open about their intention to destroy Russia. They had prepared and ready to unleash massive economic measures designed to destroy Russia's economy.

The speed at which sanctions were imposed on Russia suggests that all of these were well planned and just

waiting to go into operation. President Biden boasted that the sanctions were to be the “mother of all sanctions”. He went on to add that the Russian currency, the Ruble, would become rubble.

Russian government’s funds deposited in banks in many western countries were frozen. The attacks were not confined to the Russian Government but nationals of that country found that their investments and savings in Banks belonging to the US and EU were being confiscated. It was a massive robbery of the Russian State and businesses.

So much for the sanctity of private property.

These sanctions exposed a deep hatred for the Russian people and everything Russian by the Western powers.

Coming under attack were Russian sports persons. Russians were deprived from taking part in the Olympic Games under their own flag. Some tennis tournaments banned Russians and Belarus players from participating while others were deprived of playing under their own flag. Sports were being weaponized in the attack on Russia.

As if these measures were not enough, the west turned on a most abominable attack on Russian culture. Russian cultural groups were banned from performing in the west. Books by Russian authors or books on Russians were taken out of libraries and book stores. These included the classics. Literature by Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and others were removed from libraries in the west. Classical Russian music was also subjected to the onslaught. This was an attack on everything Russian. This is an attempt to wipe out a people.

In the meantime on the military aspect the US was able to drag Europe along with it in their mad rush to destroy Russia. It has aligned itself with the most reactionary elements in Europe and has been openly pushing to keep the war going. Billions of dollars in modern weapons are being poured into Ukraine.

The German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbole, late in January said openly “we are fighting a war against Russia.” Not to be outdone, Boris Johnson, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom added his voice to Merkel’s and Holland’s in admitting that the Minsk agreement was just a smoke screen to arm and train Ukraine. He called it a “diplomatic Charade.”

The US apart from its direct involvement in Ukraine has resorted to state terrorism against Russia and surprisingly Europe as well.

In February 2023, Seymour Hersh, one of the most

famous Investigative Journalist, made a compelling Case in his article, “How America Took out the Nord Stream Pipeline” He amassed convincing evidence to show that it was the US that mounted a covert operation to destroy Russian gas from reaching Europe. The motive was first aimed at Russia. It was also to deprive Germany from having the option of cheap Russian gas. That was to ensure that Germany would not have been tempted to make an agreement with Russia to stop the war. All stops were being removed.

Moreover it has tied Germany even tighter to the US and made her dependence on US gas and oil almost complete. The attack on Nord Stream 2 is just as much an attack on Germany as it is on Russia. The German leadership has remained subdued and unable to lift a finger in protest.

The consequences of this type of terrorism could be the deindustrialization of Germany. Very brazenly the US has established policies to attract European Industries to the US. The bait is cheap oil and gas in the US as compared to expensive ones in Germany.

The US treats Europe as its colony and is abusing it as colonies were abused. That was reflected in two incidents. In 2014 Victoria Nuland, a high official in the US State Department, in deciding who should be president of Ukraine after the US organized 2014 coup said F###k the EU in response to an ambassador’s request to consult the European Union on the issue.

Recall too in December 2021 at a joint press Conference between President Biden and Olaf Shultz, Chancellor of Germany, Biden said that if Russia attacked Ukraine, Nord Stream two would be stopped. He promised this while Shultz stood there, like a little boy, at his side.

It has become clear for those who initially refused to see that it is the US and the new-conservative forces in Europe that has initiated and kept the war going. Those are forces that hated Russia since the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917. It seems impossible for them to stop despite the fact that the Soviet Union is no more. They still harbor intentions of destroying Russia. That has led them to arm and finance fascist forces in Ukraine. This, even though Russia is no longer socialist.

It is impossible to draw any other conclusion when we see every proposal to encourage peace talks between Russia and Ukraine being sabotaged by the West.

Recall that in March/April 2022 Russia and Ukraine reached an agreement to end the conflict when Zilinsky stopped the process at the behest of the US and the United Kingdom.

The latest such proposal came from President Xi Jing Pin of China. President Zelinsky welcomed the proposal and said he would like to meet President Xi on the question. The next day the US rejected it and Zelinsky has gone silent.

Zelinsky may very well be a prisoner of sorts. One of the main forces fighting in the Ukraine against Russia is the fascist Bandera group. This is the body that fought with Hitler during World War II and is now very influential in Ukraine. Bandera, the fascist is now a national hero in Ukraine. That fascist organization is being armed by the US with very sophisticated weapons. They operate US made HIMARS multiple launch rocket systems and are provided with intelligence from the US to attack hospitals and schools in Ludansk and in Donesk.

On February, 2023 videos appeared showing those fascist forces shooting Russian prisoners of war.

It could very well be that NATO is using this group to keep Zelinsky in check. If he tries to make a settlement the US can use the fascist group to stop him. To justify his removal all they have to do is to resurrect his known corrupt past. The US and the most reactionary elements in NATO are determined to keep the war going at the expense of the people of Ukraine.

### **The War and the Changing World**

Meanwhile, the situation in the Ukraine is accelerating major changes in economic and political relations in the world.

In response to the massive sanctions of the US and EU, Russia has taken counter measures that must be causing very serious concerns in Washington.

Its demand to be paid for gas and oil in rubles has effectively nullified the worst effects of the sanctions. Moreover Russia has begun to encourage trade with other countries in local currencies, thus lessening dependence on the US dollar. This measure is welcomed by many countries, some of which were subjected to US sanctions and others that see this move as a sort of immunization from future US sanctions.

In this situation the Chinese Yen is growing in importance as one of the most stable reserve currency in the world. This is sending chills down the spines of imperialism. The US, which Foreign Policy is geared to weaken China, has inadvertently given China a great push forward.

In the meantime, a search for other options is continuing. That is creating shifts in alliances in the world.

In this process the BRICS alliance has become very

attractive to many emerging economies. More and more countries are seeking to join this grouping seeing it as a vehicle to enhance their options, thus strengthening their own sovereignty. These include Mexico, Argentina, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The aggressiveness of the US and EU has accelerated the formation of new alliances.

Russia has clearly taken steps to reduce its trade relations with Europe. It finally seems to have woken up to the reality that the west has no good intentions towards the Russian people. It is rapidly pivoting towards Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Today the issue has changed. Russia is no longer seeking to strengthen relations with Europe but is consciously turning away from it.

Russia is benefiting from the tremendous solidarity work that the Soviet Union had given to countries that were struggling for National Liberation throughout the world during the post war period.

It is because of many of these changes that NATO is seeking to defeat Russia. Russia's defeat would mean a more direct re-colonialization of most of the world's peoples. This is being realized by more and more states and that is why the support for Russia in Asia, Africa and Latin America is growing.

### **How to End the War**

So far all the efforts to end the confrontation have not succeeded. As noted above Ukraine has already been colonized and is not allowed to make a decision on peace on its own. The US and some of the neo-cons in the west often say that the settlement depends on what Ukraine wants. They say this because they are aware that they are the ones who pull Zelensky's strings.

At the moment there are some important proposals on the table which deserve serious consideration. In the first instance we have the proposal by the Pope to use the Vatican as a place for negotiating peace. This must be supported.

There are proposals from Helga LaRush of the Scheller Institute. She has proposed ten points which also link peace to development. These must be given very serious consideration as well.

More recently President Lula of Brazil has made proposals which are aimed at getting countries involved in bringing an end to this dangerous situation.

The proposal by President Xi of China is well thought out and can make an important contribution to the restoration of Peace in Europe and the world.

## Conclusion

All the proposals that are on the table individually and collectively can be the basis for the beginning of the process towards peace.

All of these proposals are worthwhile and have many common positions that should be explored.

Most important however must be recognition that the security of Russia and Ukraine are interlinked and cannot be separated. Only Russia can guarantee Ukraine's security. However Ukraine can also guarantee Russia's security by refusing to become a pawn in NATO's quest for total world domination.

Guyana's most famous poet Martin Carter wrote in one of his poems of resistance that we are all involved, we are all consumed. Those words have a striking meaning in these times when four nuclear armed states are involved in this bitter conflict.

That is why we must all get involved. Therefore we must support direct action by the masses in every part of the world. We urge that people take to the streets to demand our right to live in peace!

One year of this conflict is too long. We must act now to stop the sufferings of working people at the soonest!



*Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper and other publications.*

# Paul Leroy Robeson: A Person Extraordinaire (1898 - 1976)

During the second week of April, while in a serious “gaff” at Red House, Cde Donald Ramotar, with his usual fantastic memory of events, mentioned that this year was the one hundred and twenty fifth (125th) birth anniversary of the great American, Paul Robeson, and since “The Thinker” was in its final stage of editing, it would’ve been fitting to recognize him in this edition.

I was tasked with this assignment, so here goes an attempt to reflect on the life of a PERSON EXTRAORDINAIRE.

Paul Leroy Robeson was born on April 9, 1898, the youngest of five children of William Drew and Maria Louisa Robeson.

His father was born into slavery, escaped at an early age and was eventually ordained as Minister in the Presbyterian Church.

Paul was one of the unsung heroes of the American working class, an academician, sporting personality, stage and film actor, singer, activist and held firm to his strong political positions for which he was persecuted in many ways.

His fluency in speaking many European languages, and Swahili helped him in acquiring a clear understanding of other peoples’ cultures and political struggles. Very few persons of his time could claim to have been so accomplished in such a wide repertoire while at the same time being discriminated, victimized and subjected to the persecution that he was, almost entirely due to his political anti-imperialist and cultural convictions.

At the age of seventeen, Paul was awarded an academic scholarship to Rutgers college, becoming the third African-American accepted there and the only one at the time.

While studying there he joined the debating team and sang off-campus to earn spending money. He was twice named a consensus All-American in football and was so gifted, voted “class valedictorian”.



At Rutgers, he was vocal in pointing out the differences in opportunities and treatment of African Americans fighting in World War 1 when compared to whites.

He went on to read Law and received his LL.B from Columbia Law School, but practiced law only briefly, giving it up because of racism. Naturally, financial implications were involved and his wife became the financial support of their family, while working at the New York Presbyterian Hospital.

Towards the end of 1924, he played Jim in the show “All God’s Chillun got Wings” the opening of which was postponed due to the nationwide controversy over its plot, in which Jim metaphorically consummated his marriage with his white wife by symbolically emasculating himself.

Robeson during the period of delay in “Chillun” played Brutus in “The Emperor Jones” and these two plays in ways introduced him on the path of what was to become an internationally acclaimed actor. His wife eventually

became his agent and successfully negotiated his first movie role in a silent race film, "Body and Soul".

He teamed up with the renowned pianist Lawrence Brown and thrilled audiences with their captivating performances of African - American folk songs and spirituals, resulting in Victor Records signing a contract with Robeson in 1925.

Paul Robeson went on to become a celebrity on stage, in the Harlem Renaissance, before moving to London, for a number of years with his wife, Eslanda.

In 1925, he performed on stage in "Emperor Jones" and in 1928 he was acclaimed for his role in the London Premiere of "Show Boat", a major success, which was filmed in 1936 and catapulted him as an actor in films. His rendition of "Ol' Man River" was such a success that it became and STILL is THE benchmark for all future performances of this song.

The movie "Sanders of the River" in 1935, in which he played the role of Bosambo, provided a real picture of colonial African culture, and announced to the world his status as an international movie star.

However, despite its huge success, his stereotypical of a colonial African was felt by many as an embarrassment to his stature as an artist and damaging to his reputation, especially after the Nigerian representative in London, described it as "slanderous to his country".

Robeson listened and became much more politically aware of his purpose and role as an instrument of change.

While living in London he also starred in a London production of the Shakespeare play "Othello", the first of three productions of this play in his career. During his sojourn in London, Paul Robeson began his political activism by being active in the cause of the unemployed workers and anti- imperialist student movements in Britain. His support for the Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War and his involvement in the Council on Affairs (CAA) solidified his political activism.

Paul returned to the United States in 1939 and became an active supporter of the American and Allied war efforts during World War II. After the end of the war, the CAA was listed as subversive and Paul's support of this organisation caused him to be of interest to the FBI. The era of McCarthyism resulted in him being targeted and he was denied a

passport by the U.S. State Department, effectively denying his right to travel and to earn a livelihood. He was forced to move to Harlem and became involved in publishing a periodical "Freedom", critical of the United States policies from 1950 to 1955. His passport was re-issued in 1958 as a result of a U.S. Supreme Court decision, Kent v. Dulles.

Robeson, even though having a successful and rewarding career in acting and singing was dissatisfied with the political system in the United States, which he publicly criticized on his return to England in the early 1930's, and announced that he would refuse any offers to perform Central Europe (but not Russian, which he considered "Asiatic") OPERA, because the music had no connection to his heritage.

His interest in African History and its influence on culture saw him enrolled in the School of Oriental and AFRICAN studies and resulted in his essay "I want to be African" in which he expressed his desire to embrace his ancestry.

Paul Robeson, by the early 1930's had established close friendships with persons in the anti- imperialist movements and British socialists, and in December 1934, at the invitation of Sergei Eisenstein, went to the Soviet Union accompanied by his wife, Eslanda and their friend, Marie Seton. Stopping over in Berlin, gave them a ringside view of the despicable racism in Nazi Germany, which caused him to remark upon his arrival in the Soviet Union "Here I am not a negro but a human being for the first time in my life....I walk in full human dignity". So impressed was Paul Robeson with his experience in the Soviet Union that in 1936 he sent his son to study there so that he could be shielded from racist attitudes.

So respected was Robeson that he and Albert Einstein established a friendship in 1935, that lasted for nearly two decades, after they found out that they both had a passion for music and shared a hatred for fascism. Very few knew of the admiration they had for each other.

Robeson acknowledged that the struggle against fascism, especially during the Spanish Civil war was the catalyst that transformed him into a political activist, and from 1937 used his concert performances to advocate the Republican cause and the plight of the refugees occasioned by the war.

Against the advice of his business agent, Robeson decided that contemporary situations were more important than pure commercialism and profits.

Based on this view, he modified his renditions of "O' Man River" by using the word "darkies" instead of "niggers" and later on went even further by transforming it from a tragic song of resignation and protest into a battle hymn of defiance by singing "But I keep laffing/Instead of crying/I must keep fighting/ until I'm dying", (instead of the lines " Ah git's weary/An' sick of trying/Ah'm tired of living'/ an skeered of dyin").

In commemorating the Welsh people killed while fighting for the Republicans, his message spoke eloquently "The artist must take sides. He must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative."

He traveled to Spain in 1938 on the invitation of J. B. S. Haldane, went to the battlefield and to the hospital to sing to the wounded soldiers, thus giving a moral boost to the cause of the Republicans, at a time when victory was seen as unlikely.

Returning to England, he was host to Jawaharlal Nehru, as a show of support to the Indian Independence Movement, during which Nehru pointed out imperialism's support and affiliation with fascism. Robeson, thereafter, became a strong and leading voice for African nationalism and political independence.

He, with his family, returned to the United States after his last British film, "The Proud Valley" shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, and became America's number one entertainer, with a radio programme "Ballad for Americans".

Despite having achieved such fame, he had to register under an assumed name to be accommodated in a Los Angeles hotel, where he sat in the lobby every afternoon for two hours, was widely recognized, and "to ensure that the next time Blacks passed through they would have a place to stay. The ban on the restriction of black guests was lifted soon after.

After Russia was attacked, Robeson encouraged black people to support the war effort, warning that an allied defeat would "make slaves of all of us". He fully participated in concerts in support of the war efforts and frequently met emissaries, including members of Jewish Anti-Fascist Committees to denounce the war and the treatment of Jews.

In 1943, he became the first African American to play the role of Othello, with a white supporting cast, on Broadway.

During the early 1940's Robeson developed a sympathy for the Republic of China's position in the second Sino-Japanese War.

He was taught the patriotic song "Chee Lai!" ("Arise!") by the Chinese progressive activist, Lou Liangmo, and recorded it in both Chinese and English. The song became the new Republic of China's National Anthem and after its lyricist, Tian Han died in a Beijing prison, Paul Robeson continued to remit royalties to his family.

After the lynching of four African Americans in Georgia in July 1946, Robeson met with and argued with President Truman to enact legislation to end lynching, saying that "the negroes will defend themselves", after which Truman ended the meeting by declaring that the time was not right to propose anti- lynching legislation.

He formed the American Crusade Against Lynching in 1946, and campaigned for Americans, regardless of race, to call upon Congress to pass Civil Rights Legislation in this regard. This organisation was considered a threat to the anti violence NAACP and once again he was closely monitored by the FBI.

Robinson's belief that Trade Unionism was a crucial component of the Civil Rights movement and his political beliefs, formed a close relationship with union activist and Communist Party USA member, Revels Clayton. For this association, he was summoned before the Tennessean Committee to answer if he was a member of the Communist Party of the USA, to which responded in the negative.

He was subsequently summoned before the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, and asked about his affiliation with the Communist Party, to which he refused to answer, stating: "some of the most brilliant and distinguished Americans are about to go to jail for the failure to answer that question, and I am going to join them, if necessary".

In 1948, Robeson supported Henry A. Wallace's campaign for President of the USA and risking his life, travelled to the Deep South, in support of the bid.

In 1949, his concert performances were cancelled at the insistence of the FBI and he was forced to travel overseas to earn a living.

In his tours, he addressed the World Peace Council, which speech was distorted to equate America with a

Fascist state and even though he denied this depiction, he was deemed an enemy of mainstream America.

He refused to bend under criticism when he advocated in favor of twelve defendants, including his long time friend, Benjamin J Davis Jr. who were charged during the Smith Act Trials of Communist Party Leaders.

In 1960, Robeson made a two months visit to Australia and New Zealand and was the first renowned artist to perform at the construction site of the future Sydney Opera House. He went to Auckland and reaffirmed his support for Marxism-Leninism, spoke out against the inequalities faced by the Māori people. He used this occasion to say that “the people of the lands of Socialism want peace dearly”.

He demanded that the Australian government give citizenship and equal rights to the Aborigines, decrying their characterization as unsophisticated and uncultured and declared that “there is no such thing as a backward human being, there is only a society which says they are backward.

Towards the end of his life, Paul Robeson became a disillusioned man and his health deteriorated. He was stricken with fears occasioned by safety concerns, not only for himself and his family, but for his comrades as well. His health started to deteriorate to the extent that on one occasion he experienced a panic attack by just passing the Embassy of the Soviet Union and attempted suicide on at least two occasions.

He visited East Germany to seek medical attention, and doctors there were appalled at the treatment he was receiving in the Unites States, especially “overdosing” him. He started to recover somewhat, made a few tours, including one to the Soviet Union.

In December 1963 he returned to the United States and lived mainly in seclusion for the remainder of his life.

On January 23rd. 1976, following complications of a stroke, Paul Leroy Robeson died in Philadelphia, and at his funeral his pall bearers included Harry Belafonte (who passed away on 25th April, 2023 at the age of 96) and Fritz Pollard.

Harry Belafonte at a speech accepting an award said that Paul Robeson was even greater performer than he himself was.

He was bestowed with very many honors both during and after his life ended.

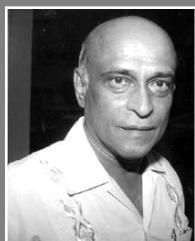
Paul Robeson was a man courageous and unwavering in his principles and beliefs.

On the local scene, my first recollection of his name was when Cde Cheddi mentioned it at a lecture at Freedom House, and consistently did so thereafter.

Also, interesting to note that in the issue of THUNDER of March 9, 1957, Cde Janet recounted her visit to the great man’s home, in a piece entitled “On my visit to America”. He was a dear and respected friend, colleague and comrade of Cds. Cheddi, Janet, the leadership and membership of the PPP.

Extremely much more can be said of Paul Robeson, but as usual time and space would not allow, at this time.

***Almost exclusively, the material for this article were obtained from Wikipedia, Google and other publications and are certainly not my own.***



*Harry Narine Nawbatt was the Former Executive Director, Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP), Former Project Manager, Poor Rural Communities Social Services Project (PRCSSP), Former Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Communication & Minister of Housing and Water, Former Ambassador of Guyana to Brazil and High Commissioner of Guyana to Canada.*

# Resurgence of the Latin American Left: Right Steps or Left Behind?



This analysis of the evolution of the recent political situation in the South American/Latin American continental region in the First Quarter of 2023 will start from the beginning of the First Two Decades of the 21st Century, when the chilling after-effects of the Afghan and Iraq wars on the world started breeding robust fightback by popular and progressive forces globally, and examine the experiences of Latin America and the Caribbean, as the inevitable contradictions of capitalism continued to take deeper root everywhere between 2000 and 2022. The analysis is also in a global context, reflecting the similarities and differences of experiences elsewhere.

## **Dawn of a New Century**

Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela all experienced political changes during the period under review and welcomed the dawn of the 21st Century with inherited economic and social backlashes from the 1990s that persevered, in most cases, between successive regime changes.

Across Latin America (Central and South) The 'Wars on Drugs' saw more drugs exported and more civilian deaths

as fighting continued between guerillas and the national armies for decades; and the cumulative effects of the 2008 US financial crisis, worsening environmental crises (from Global Warming to El Nino, La Nina and Climate Change), the COVID Pandemic and the Supply Chain Crisis, the Ukraine conflict and effects of its economic sanctions on global trade and delivery of essential food supplies to regions most in need, all colluded to help further heighten and deepen the contradictions between labor and capital.

It all also widened the gap between Haves and the Have-Nots and accelerated the decline in living standards for the poor and most vulnerable, while the privileged few grew richer and lived better – and again demonstrated their natural willingness to fight even losing battles to defend their class interests.

## **Bounced Back**

The Latin American left has bounced back since 2020, the last three years seeing progressive parties and alliances winning more elections than the decade, culminating in the recent re-election of Brazil's president Luis Ignacio 'Lula' Da Silva, following similar victories in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, etc.

Brazil, the largest and most-populous nation in the region, rejoined the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in January and President 'Lula' hosted a meeting of 15 Latin American leaders at his January inauguration, where he announced that 'Brazil is back!'

Lula and other prominent newly-elected leaders (like Argentina's Alberto Fernandez, Bolivia's Luis Arce, Chile's Gabriel Boric and Colombia's Gustavo Petro) also attended the 7th CELAC Summit in Argentina.

For the first time, a Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leader, Prime Minister of St. Vincent & The Grenadines Dr Ralph Gonsalves, was elected President Tempore of the 33-member regional grouping; and CARICOM leaders at their 2022 Summit in Surinam agreed to re-engage with Venezuela on revival of the PetroCaribe Agreement between Caracas and most CARICOM and many Latin American states.

### **Costly Fightback**

But the refreshing of the left has also been at great cost, with progressive and popular forces across the continent, including parties and trade unions, sectoral groups and Civil Society, marginalized minorities and most-vulnerable communities in urban and rural spaces having had to fight and resist maximum pressure and repressive, even violent, state responses to popular protests and uprisings, as rightwing political forces show willingness to fight to the finish to maintain power, or prevent victory by popular parties intent on pursuing positive and meaningful institutional change.

Like everywhere else, three years of the COVID Pandemic, the resulting Supply Chain crisis and one year of Ukraine-related sanctions have also had cumulative effects across Latin America; and (like always), the ruling classes and elite groups are going to all lengths to preserve their dominance, from hijacking governments and using armies and police to repress protests (as in Bolivia earlier and in Peru today), to establishment of the so-called 'Lima Group' to effectively implement hard-knocking US policy (under Donald Trump) against Venezuela within the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Trump and Biden administrations reversing whatever limited advances made during the two Obama administrations (when US-Cuba ties were restored diplomatically and the outgoing President visited Havana) and Washington returning to the traditional anti-Cuba stances normally adopted by US administrations, Republican or Democratic.

The recent bounce-backs by the Latin American left also took place against a background of shifts in US policy towards the region and the rest of the world as it seeks

to adjust and rebalance in the wake of the energy crisis resulting from the Ukraine sanctions, which haven't affected Russia as intended.

The US has adjusted its political attitude to doing oil business with Venezuela as it seeks to adjust to doing without Russian oil and gas, authorizing Chevron to import Venezuelan gas – and Caracas also making the appropriate political demands to ensure a 'win-win' situation for all sides. (Likewise, the Biden administration has also back-pedaled on its earlier hostilities to Saudi Arabia and other OPEC and OPEC+ oil producers to make way for filling the gaps in Russian oil and gas supplies. And same with Germany...)

There are also noticeable and welcome changes in Latin American and CARICOM leaders' responses to some of the excessive diplomatic moves by Washington under Biden, especially its exclusion of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela from attending the 2022 Summit of the Americas and their continuing refusal to side with any side in Ukraine, calling for peace while North America and Europe beat the war drums louder.

### **No More Banana Republics**

Indeed, none of the apparent favorable gestures by Washington must be seen outside the context of the new and interesting political situation in the US involving an unusual level of bilateral bipartisan between the two parties in Congress, as 2024 Presidential elections approach.

With developing nations taking or demanding more control of their national and natural assets and resources, the rich nations that have historically dominated extraction and production of their resources are either digging-in or threatening to opt out, at great cost to host nations that cannot afford to invest in the production process.

But while the days of banana republics are over in Latin America, new governments leaning left are also coming under increasing attack in places like Bolivia and Chile with lithium and copper mines absolutely essential for production of cell phone and electric car batteries globally.

The race towards electrification of vehicles is increasing the need for rare earths in Latin America and widening the scope for more new investment in old resources and recent discoveries, also increasing possibilities of further related cooperation with China, which already controls 75% of rare earths on Planet Earth.

Green Energy comes with its own challenges to ensure that the ultimate cost of Green Energy doesn't come

with worse health problems for populations in areas of extraction, especially from historical experiences in the world's largest open-pit copper mine in the Chilean desert, which produced 470,000 tons in 2022 (or 18% of global demand).

But copper from that mine is already reducing given the extraction and export rate, where water is used at 2,000 liters per second in an area where it hasn't rained for 500 years (Yes, five centuries).

Accumulated experiences in most of the countries that have re-elected left leaders have also exposed the emptiness of traditional politicians seeking power for reasons other than promoting and improving people's welfare, with corrupt and failed right-wing presidents of different political complexions quickly replaced at national polls despite using state power to prolong the status quo.

In many cases (like Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru), largely rural-based and historically-marginalized indigenous peoples get caught in the crosshairs of the battles for political control in capitals, often having to march to cities and close airports and highways in protest.

Since January 2023, indigenous protesters in Peru have been taking the resistance fight to the army unleashed by the unpopular President Dina Boluarte, who succeeded the jailed popular elected president Pedro Castillo after he tried to use the constitution to resist being ousted by a quiet unholy alliance between his opponents in parliament and on the supreme court.

Boluarte, like ex-Bolivian president Jeanine Anez (who was in office between 2019 and 2022 and is now convicted for her role in the aftermath of the violent overthrow of indigenous president Evo Morales), is insisting on holding on to power and likewise trying to prevent the possibility of her predecessor running in the next presidential elections by seeking to hold it only after his long jail sentence is confirmed by the judiciary.

But where they have been historically neglected, indigenous people take extreme actions, like in Colombia's Caqueta region recently, where they disarmed and held dozens of oil workers and police officers, to make a case for better roads long-promised by the company, until successful intervention by President Gustavo Petro.

### **The Petro Difference**

Latin America is also seeing its own rebalancing of ties and tactics between progressive leaders, as between Colombia and Venezuela since the election of the Petro administration last year, led by a former guerrilla and

with a Vice President of African descent also backing the growing call for South America to be included in the global movement for redressing racial and ethnic imbalances, for improvement of the causes of and respect for rights of minority Afro Latinos across the continent.

The decision by the Petro administration to end the decades-old so-called 'Wars on Drugs' that continued for years after previous government and guerilla leaders receiving a Nobel Prize for Peace has also recently seen the 60-year battle with the ELN fighters coming to an end -- and cooperation between the neighboring Bolivarian states will most likely bring significant levels of political, economic and social cooperation.

The political and economic alliances between Cuba and Venezuela in the 1990s, despite the deaths of Hugo Chavez (2013) and Fidel Castro (2016) yielded the Milagro (Miracle) eye care program funded by Venezuela and largely facilitated by Cuba, that saw hundreds of thousands of Latin American and Caribbean citizens get free eye care in Havana as well as through Cuban medical clinics in the states involved.

The PetroCaribe mechanism helped Latin American and Caribbean nations involved overcome costly energy challenges and source Venezuelan fuel at cheaper prices, while savings and earnings went towards broadening, strengthening and deepening production of agricultural crops to reduce Food Import Bills, as well as bartering arrangements that benefitted all and each.

There was also a much-earlier discussion between several states, including Brazil, Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela to develop a South American currency to be called the 'Sucre'; and earlier this year Argentina and Brazil announced they intend to establish a new common currency, the 'sur', to reduce dependence on the US dollar for global trade.

No country is getting a free ride today on the world wide web and the global information super highway and no government has been able to insulate any nation from the combined effects of the accumulated economic and social crises created everywhere by the backlashes of international economic sanctions that have hit the rest of the world, rich and poor, harder than Russia.

Europe and North America continue to fund the Ukraine war by the billions monthly, but are increasingly looking inward following their worst Winters of Discontent in 2022, continuing to give discriminatory preference to Ukrainian refugees, while raising fortress drawbridges at borders and along beaches, to prevent entry by refugees and asylum seekers fleeing from wars, violence and hard economic times in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, etc.), Africa, Afghanistan,

Iraq, Libya and Syria, where millions face hunger and starvation thanks to wars and supply chain blockages delaying essential food deliveries from private and public world food programs.

With increasingly less access to needed financial resources and without more of the profits from national natural resources long dominated by traditional local, European and North American families, progressive Latin American governments will also continue to find it difficult to implement new ideas and projects to better improve people's conditions at paces commensurate with their social and economic decline.

Governing elites and powerful opposition forces (like in Peru and Brazil, respectively) have at different times demonstrated their unwillingness to bow to popular demands or accept electoral defeat, instead loudly pledging to continue resisting popular pressure through use of armed force and forces, even at great cost of lives, to preserve a status quo that continues to ignore the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly rural populations.

Indeed, Brazil's ex-President Jair Bolsonaro, who, like his mentor Donald Trump refuses to accept having been voted out of office, has shown, in his absence, that he still has sufficient support at home to cause mayhem, while biding time with Biden and courting Trump in the US since January, supporting the latter's return to challenge the former – and promising to return home soon to continue where he left off after refusing to attend Lula's inauguration and basking in the delight of thousands of his supporters attacking the government and constitutional courts' headquarters and destroying state property, akin to the deadly and destructive invasion on the US capitol by Donald Trump's supporters on January 8, 2021.

But just as necessity is the mother of invention, creative application, adaptations and adoption of new approaches to old problems in this new age of IT and Artificial Intelligence (AI), whole new worlds of opportunities also open for youth to join the national economic movement by introducing new methods and approaches that will attract their minds and engage their IT skills to make agriculture more interesting and encourage innovative business start-ups oriented to sustainable national development and not just permanent assessment of profit-and-loss margins.

### **Deepening South-South Cooperation**

The new scenario in 2023 lays a better basis than ever for further, deeper and stronger cooperation between government, with leading inputs by progressive ones, to develop the new levels of South-South cooperation

necessary and possible to bring more relief to the continent's people who've been wrecked and wracked by the continuing and accumulating effects of shortages and sanctions, growing inflation, deepening recession and continuing disability of governments, irrespective of political and ideological complexion, to satisfactorily address the problems created by higher food and fuel prices that affect everyone, but the poorest worst.

The global trend of the top 1% getting much richer and the remaining 99% growing poorer during the COVID Pandemic and the Ukraine conflict also reflected in the region, where the stronger foreign-owned and externally-backed corporations have been able to better survive while local producers and manufacturers, farmers and other micro, small and medium enterprises go bust.

But the region's current leaders, like everyone else, also have access to information on what's happening everywhere else in similar circumstances and will understand the need for more, better and deeper international, regional, multilateral and bilateral cooperation and coordination in all global entities to which the continent's states belong, including the BRICS, G-77, CELAC, Non-Aligned Movement, Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP), as well as more active coordination in United Nations bodies (including the General Assembly and entities like its Permanent Forums for First People, Environment, Sustainable Development, People of African Descent, etc.)

The possibility of other Latin American states joining Brazil in an expanded BRICS+, the continent's deepening relationships with China, creation of a new (Panama-style) canal in Nicaragua and the effect of the recent creation of a new South American currency on continuing efforts to 'de-dollarize' the global economy (by reducing the US dollar's dominance as the preferred currency for international trade).

### **The Propaganda Wars**

Back in the 1990s, Latin American and Caribbean nations agreed to establish the teleSUR news channel, based in Venezuela, which keeps a pulse on socio-political, geopolitical and economic in the region in ways that also highlight the inequalities as well as the positive achievements of regional events, even though in ways understandably unappreciated by North American elements opposed to positive and progressive South-South interpretations of regional and global events.

Three decades later, Social Media have changed many aspects of how political parties campaign for elections and causes, but the battle for minds continues to rage and propaganda is still as essential and effective as ever for all sides, as, thanks to Information Technology

(IT) and the greater role of Information Technology (IT) in influencing electors today than at the close of the 20th century, more people everywhere can relate their struggles to others elsewhere.

The sorry episode of the experience of Julian Assange and the roles of successive Ecuador governments and the role of the UK and US intelligence agencies and diplomatic services in extraditing him to the US also opened eyes across the continent and worldwide to the selective application of laws by rich states in cases involving developing nations.

However, in every case where elections have been between right and left, the battles in the information wars are not only about politics and ideology or identification with people's causes, but also ability to offer visionary and workable solutions that people can relate to after decades of accumulation of mistrust of traditional politicians who've simply become rich after being elected to government and not delivering on promises to improve the lot of people in poor communities that simply continue to expand with commensurate worsening of economic and social problems.

First People and other indigenous voices with long histories of activism are getting their louder voices heard, as are new social minority alliances (like LGBTQI and others) as people respond more quickly and in larger numbers to increasing exposure of long-held but deeply-hidden institutional racism and social prejudices, even while migration has not decreased.

The usual narrative continues to place new Latin American leaders in a bad light, with the global media houses highlighting on March 11 that Chilean President Gabriel Boric "has ended his first year with a second Cabinet reshuffle..."

### **Guyana, South America and The Caribbean**

Guyana, is strategically located between South America and the Caribbean (and the only English-speaking nation in Latin America), the largest Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member-state (and host of the CARICOM Secretariat) and shares borders with Brazil and Venezuela, Dutch-speaking Surinam and French Guiana, a French 'Overseas Department' in South America.

It's geographic location in and to The Americas, The Guianas and the CARICOM region's island chain (from Trinidad & Tobago to Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica) places Guyana in a strategic position to facilitate and promote active cooperation between the said three regions; and the energy resources in the Guiana Shield (Guyana, French Guiana and Surinam) have the potential to change life for national populations and generate new forms of cooperation between neighbors.

Guyana's new place among the fastest-growing oil-based economies globally also holds many more possibilities, even while it continues to diversify its oil, gas and energy partnerships with neighbors and distant partners.

Guyana and Brazil (with Trinidad & Tobago) can also help Surinam better and faster develop its new oil and gas reserves and inland alternative energy resources towards making the Caribbean more energy efficient, with Latin American oil and gas producing nations starting to do likewise, both to reduce levels of dependence on traditional external sources for resources they can produce.

The possibilities are rosy, as all challenges also bring opportunities, but the sheer cost of delivering on election promises today is beyond electoral or commercial and has consequences for political power, as people will feel same to hunger and thirst, many feeling neglected or deserted by their respective parties, in or out of office.

Supporters of victorious parties always expect better treatment and opposition supporters always complain of being treated badly, ruling parties therefore having harder times delivering today and opposition parties easier able to ride opportunistically on the popular disaffection that in many cases started when they were in office.

Traditional approaches of governments and opposition parties will have to change everywhere on the continent, which won't be easy either, as new generations backing change clash with the old and ideas continue to contend in the court of public opinion.

Ruling parties will have to broaden their outreach scopes beyond constituency or provincial boundaries and opposition parties will have to start recognizing they also have a role to support elected governments' national development plans when they can work, instead seeing themselves as parliamentary stumbling blocks and brakes on the pace of delivery of people's benefits.

Indigenous people and minorities of African, Asian, Indian and European descent also need to be included in the wider picture.

Guyana also has several historical places in the progressive movement in Latin America (and the Caribbean), including the election of the popular Dr Cheddi Jagan, as an avowed communist, to the colonial parliament of British Guiana in 1946 and him also leading the People's Progressive Party (PPP) to election victory in 1953, a full 18 years before Salvador Allende was elected in Chile.

Dr Jagan was succeeded by his US-born wife Janet who was also persecuted by Washington for her communist

leanings, and the PPP would also be repeatedly elected after democracy was restored in 1992, with Bharrat Jagdeo being the only PPP/CIVIC leader, after Dr Jagan, to have been twice elected President and only being forced away from a third term by the two-term limit adopted ahead of the 2000 elections that started Jagdeo's 10-year double term, during which the economy turned around significantly, thanks too to the creative applications of experienced long-term technocrats drawn from the party's fold, as well as the cooperative private sector and Civil Society, across party lines, regions and communities.

### New Political Norms

The New Norms in Latin American politics mirror new alignments and realignments on the global stage: like between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Syria and Iran and Tunisia and Syria, the increasing interest in many more developing nations joining the BRICS, China's growing acceptance as a peace broker in Ukraine and its willingness to take the West on over Taiwan, as well as North Korea's loud and stout resistance to and condemnation of military incursions by the US with South Korea and Japan in the Peninsula, efforts to create a new NATO-style anti-

China military alliance in the South China Sea and the determination of some nations to continue the Ukraine war indefinitely to further grease the military-industrial complexes.

It's still too early to come to hard-and-fast conclusions about how the new and experienced Latin American and Caribbean leaders will fare in the months and years ahead, but it's fair to say they have the experiences to choose between forging ahead quickly and tempering the pace of progress, according to new and evolving circumstances.

Brazil and Mexico, from their own experiences in size, trade proximate historical factors, cannot be expected to proceed recklessly, just as new leaders cannot expect to ignore experiences of predecessors elsewhere who failed to grasp and survive the transitions and generational changes.

But like everywhere else, the new challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean also bring new opportunities that can go a long way, if embraced early enough and acted upon speedily, but without undue haste.



*Mr. Earl Bousquet was a former Editor of the Mirror Newspaper. He was Chairman of the Board of Directors for the television station GTV and a Director at the Guyana Broadcasting Corporation. As a veteran Journalist, Earl served in various capacities in a number of Regional and International Organisations including the International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ).*

# Reflections on those Difficult Years



I concede at the very beginning of this essay that I make no pretense of being a historian, and that there are many who are much more qualified to write on the DIFFICULT YEARS OF THE 60's through the 80's and spilling over into 2020.

As would also be appreciated, it CANNOT also be a complete picture of ALL the happenings (traumatic, fearful and exciting at times) but I would be impertinent to suggest, that nearly all that occurred during those years, cleared the way for the successes being achieved today. ALL the events referred to are entirely from my memory (which, fortunately is still functioning) and may not be in chronological order.

I remember being a member of the Progressive Youth Organisation (PYO, the youth arm of the PPP) which in the 60's was an Organisation someone was proud to serve in, while at the same time was a risk, in some parts of the country to be known as a member. The PYO was respected, not only in Guyana but internationally, for the militancy it exhibited almost on a daily basis, by its membership in groups throughout the country. A few of our current leadership in government (and some out of government) were part of that movement, with President Irfan Ali, former President Donald Ramotar and current Vice President, Bharrat Jagdeo the most prominent of these.

The PYO was its parent body's "task force" for picketings,

protests, vigils, demonstrations and debates on any and all local and international issues related to democracy, working class solidarity, defense of oppressed peoples worldwide and ideological issues.

I remember being encouraged/persuaded to join the PYO by the late Cde. Louis Mitchell (familiarily known as Coffee, a friend of my father), and started attending meetings at freedom house at first and afterwards in Campbellville, while still attending secondary school.

MY first actual experience of the racist and unprovoked attack from the PNC was on 30th. May, 1963 at the funeral of Minister of home affairs, Claude Christian, A few school friends and I went to La Repentir burial ground and before the burial was finished, the thugs were let loose on those in attendance. One of my friends (Bissoon Ramsarran) was mercilessly beaten and had to be hospitalized for weeks and another (Romeo Bacchus) living on Punt Trench Dam (now Independence Blvd) and my brother had to throw their bicycle in the Sussex Street trench and "clear" the trench in desperation, to out run the mob (all attempts to repeat it after, failed). Hundreds of Guyanese of East Indian origin were brutally beaten with at least one dying. I myself passed Bindra Sookraj and Neville Kallicharran, at the corner of Princess Street and Louisa Row, being beaten to the extent that Neville Kallicharran ended up losing an eye.

I was riding East on Princess Street, trying to reach my

home in Hardina Street, when a posse of bikers came after me. Out of nowhere, "my guarding angel" came alongside and told the thugs that I was her "god son" and should not be touched. I've never seen that lady before or after, but I'm certain that if it weren't for her, I would be badly beaten or worse. She, who was of African descent, rode alongside me until I reached home.

This was my baptism to what I would like to refer to as my "political activism".

THE visit of Nelson Rockefeller in 1972 witnessed the harassment of PYO cadres and PPP members and supporters AND the detention of comrades Narbada Persaud, Moses Nagamootoo, Inderjeet Singh, Rohit Persaud and Anand Sewdarsan. Feroze Mohamed, PYO's First Secretary at the time, had to "hide away" at a house in Georgetown, for about five days, to avoid being "put away" and only resurfaced after the departure of the US politician.

Our comrades were taken away from their homes between 2 and 3am, WITHOUT any of the legal requirements (warrants or reasons given for their detention). Such was the adherence to Rule of Law in THOSE DARK days (and nights).

I remember being nearly locked up myself when I went to "Special Branch" on Camp Street (opposite QC) to enquire about our Comrades and to take a meal for them, at the request of the Party.

In those TERRIFYING times in our history, our members were subjected to arbitrary arrests and detention, under the State of Emergencies' Proclamations by the Burnham government (I wonder if Hamilton Green in his "ELDERLY FULMINATIONS" remember these).

THIRTY FOUR persons of PPP persuasion, including thirteen blacks and one woman, were rounded up in the same manner as described above, without any charges, and detained for months, in 1964, at SIBLEY HALL in the Mazaruni.

Many of them remained there on the day Guyana became an Independent nation, making our country the ONLY Commonwealth country to have POLITICAL PRISONERS on such an important day in its history.

AGAIN, in 1965, another batch, including CV Nunes, a former minister of Education and Prakash Persaud, a public servant, were detained, WITHOUT any charges levelled against them.

HAVING referred to the Dark period in our past, brings to mind the barefaced murder of Catholic Priest, Father Darke outside the Georgetown Magistrate's Court on a Saturday morning, by thugs from the House of Israel, a supposedly religious organisation led by a fugitive from the U.S. who was "commissioned" by Burnham's PNC to create havoc and terror on the streets of Georgetown.

In those days, public servants worked half day on Saturdays and as I was attached to the Deeds Registry, I was outside the Magistrate's Court and saw Rabbi Washington going in the office and making a call. A colleague working there told me that he called someone and "reported" "it's done". One could only assume who he was talking to. My colleague, needless to say was terrified to come forward with what he heard.

Burnham's "steel" was indeed sharper on that day, as he used to repeatedly warn his opponents.

ANOTHER incident at Parade Ground comes to mind, when some friends of Walter Rodney had arranged a meeting to protest the refusal to employ him at UG.

The PNC and YSM turned up and proceeded to display their hooliganism against those in attendance. While Dr. Jagan was speaking, "Rodie" Thomas (the brother of Jeffery Thomas, a minister of Home Affairs under the PNC) and who was my classmate in primary school, attacked a cameraman and a scuffle ensued. A number of persons were brutally pounced upon, thrown on the tarmac, stamped upon, beaten and kicked.

Vincent Teekah, who was with the PYO at that time turned up at Freedom House to be treated (even though he slinked away when the ruckus started) and had to be embarrassingly told that he was not injured and ordered out by Cde Ram Karran.

Teekah was such a coward, that he warned me about taking a "flyer" from a PPP comrade as I was going in to work at the Ministry of Finance, then housed at Parliament building.

THEN there was the incident on the day of the Referendum in 1980, when Clement, Donald, George Lee and I were checking out voting places to record with photographs, the actual almost zero voting in Georgetown, PNC's stronghold, when a Guyana Defence Force Land Rover started following us. To avoid "capture" of ourselves and the confiscation of our photographic evidence, we started a "cat and mouse" game with the GDF, which lasted for about thirty minutes, with them being only



a few car lengths behind us. We managed to out run them with some dangerous maneuvers, especially around Bourda market and on Regent street. Eventually, we reached Freedom House with them surrounding us before we could have exited the car. In an attempt to save the camera, George gave me the camera which I strapped to my feet and refused to exit the car.

The incident was reported upstairs and both Cds. Janet and Cheddi came to our rescue with Cde Janet taking possession of the camera.

The satisfaction we got was when they drove off in an embarrassing frenzy, two of their ranks fell off their vehicle, much to the vocal amusement of the public who had gathered to observe what was taking place.

There are numerous other instances involving cameras and photographs being seized/stolen by these goons, whose leadership seemed to be utterly terrified of photographic evidence of their ruthlessness. Father Darke was a photographer for the Catholic Standard, a weekly newspaper critical of the PNC, at that time.

THOSE still around must have a different point of view than he who now prefers to call himself "elder". He used to be feared to the extent that even his own in the PNC, avoided him. He would go around with his Party's rag, the new nation, and threaten those who were bold enough to refuse to buy it.

I remember him asking a messenger at GAIBANK, where I was auditing, for my name, after I told him I wasn't interested in reading his paper.

Public servants were instructed to "volunteer" to go Hope estate on Saturdays, in order to get a chance to buy scarce items, like split peas, milk, cigarettes, etc. The

KABAKA would be on his horse, like the slave master, supervising the slaves who were in the trenches. There were a handful of us who refused to "volunteer" and paid the consequences, denial of promotions, immediate transfers (with one day's notice), and otherwise.

VEHICLES coming from PPP meetings were intercepted and in many instances, taken into "custody" with their occupants, at specially set up road blocks. Cove and John being one such police road block where four of us coming from West Coast Berbice, were detained, and thrown in a cell, with about fifteen others, detained for various offenses.

During elections all parties painted the roads, sea walls with their campaign slogans and put election material on lantern posts, fences, etc. The PNC believed that no party other than their's had a right to campaign in "their strongholds" and many times our comrades were cornered and beaten and their material "confiscated".

I remember one night when their gang attacked us and a comrade, to defend himself, threw the paint in the face of his attacker, which effectively brought their aggression to an end.

MANY more incidents like the above are fresh in my memory:

LIKE the trumped up charges of our comrades, and the name of Arnold Rampersaud comes immediately to mind.

LIKE the murder of Kowsilla, a female sugar worker, who was run over by a tractor at Leonora estate while protesting during a strike called for better working conditions.

LIKE the murder of our comrades, Jagan Ramessar and Bholanauth Parmanand in Berbice, for resisting the seizure of ballot boxes by the GDF and Police. Cds. Dado Motie (recently deceased) and Bijulee Motie, bravely led those demonstrations.

LIKE the simultaneous bombing of GIMPEX on Brickdam and FREEDOM HOUSE, where the PYO heroes, Micheal Forde and Edward Griffith were murdered.

LIKE the burning and looting of Indian business places in Georgetown, which the PNC/UF organized, with the funding and complicit involvement of the CIA.

AND one can go on and on, establishing the undemocratic credentials of the PNC:

LIKE the massive rigging of EVERY election from 1968 to 1985 (and I say emphatically, the 2015 one as well). It would be interesting if former Chairman Steve Surujballi and former CEO of GECOM Keith Lowenfield could explain the refusal to recount EVEN ONE ballot box to confirm the authenticity of the numbers used to declare that the APNU+AFC had “won” those elections.

As former President Donald Ramotar, continues to argue,

the results declared (again with the implicit support of many of the Diplomatic community, including the “fat one”) did NOT reflect the will of the people.

THE APNU+AFC having tasted the “perks of power” between 2015 and 2020, did their darndest to stay in power. Their blatant lies, distortions and bully tactics all failed, although it took FIVE dangerous months for a legitimate government to be installed.

To date, the two Russians who were “deported” CANNOT be named or the evidence found;

The “jumbies who voted and those who were NOT in Guyana on elections day is still a laughing matter and an embarrassment to the authors of those comedies.

HOWEVER, most revealing is their refusal to produce their SOP’s to prove to the Guyanese people and the world at large, their contention of having “won” the 2020 elections.

HISTORY WILL CERTAINLY NOT ABSOLVE THEM, for the trauma, destruction, deaths, shame and embarrassment they caused the Guyanese people to be subjected to.



*Harry Narine Nawbatt was the Former Executive Director, Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP), Former Project Manager, Poor Rural Communities Social Services Project (PRCSSP), Former Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Communication & Minister of Housing and Water, Former Ambassador of Guyana to Brazil and High Commissioner of Guyana to Canada.*

# Steps taken to prevent a repeat of the 2020 General and Regional Elections Fiasco in Guyana



This article is intended to reflect on the General and Regional Elections held in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on March 2, 2020 and to highlight some of the steps taken, to prevent such a scenario reoccurring in future elections to be conducted by the Guyana Elections Commission.

As I briefly retrace the events which led to the holding of elections on March 2020, I will start with the No Confidence Motion which was tabled by the People's Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/C) in the National Assembly. Recall the PPP/C was occupying the Opposition benches with 32 seats and the APNU/AFC collation was occupying the government benches with 33 seats. After much delays, the No Confidence Motion was approved for debate on December 21, 2018. The Motion was successfully passed with a 33 for and 32 against. This situation, in keeping with the laws of Guyana, required the President to dissolve Parliament so that the Elections Commission can hold General and Regional Elections within the stipulated three months (90 days).

The Attorney General, at that time, Basil Williams challenged the validity of the passing of the no confidence motion in the High Court. The Chief Justice (Acting) ruled

on the 31 January 2019 that the no confidence motion was legally passed. Basil Williams appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeal which, on March 22, 2019, by a majority vote of 2 to 1 overturned the Chief Justice's ruling. The People's Progressive Party / Civic appealed the ruling of the Court of Appeal to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), Guyana's final Court, which on June 8, 2019 overturned the decision of the Court of Appeal and reinstate the Chief Justice's ruling. Consequently, David Granger, on September 25, 2019, announced that General and Regional Elections will be held on March 2, 2020. Meanwhile in February 2019, the Guyana Elections Commission stated "that there was not enough time left to organise elections by the constitutional deadline of mid-March. It was reported that the opposition might agree to postpone them until a later date".

Nine (9) Political Parties expressed interest in contesting the March 2, 2020 General and Regional Elections. The Campaign was filled with the usual manifestations of Guyana's political landscape. On 19 January 2019, the PPP/C chose former Housing minister Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali as its presidential candidate. Former Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defence Force, Brigadier Mark Phillips, was chosen as his running mate.

On 16 June, the AFC chose Khemraj Ramjattan as its candidate for Prime Minister should the APNU-AFC coalition be returned to power with Granger as president.

An agreement was made by Liberty and Justice Party, The New Movement and A New and United Guyana to combine their lists for the national allocation of seats. The pre-election agreement was for the parties to share any seats won for a period of time relative to their proportion of the vote

Elections day proceeded smoothly and efficiently. All political parties stated that the voting process, plus the counting of votes at polling stations, were free, fair and credible. The International and Local Observers teams described elections day activities, voting and the initial counting of ballots at the place of poll as being free, fair and credible, it must be noted that in the International Observers team were the Ambassadors of the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, the European Union as well as former Barbadian Prime Minister, Owen Arthur. Counting of votes was done in the presence of all political parties, as well as local and international observers. At every polling station, Statements of Poll (SOPs) were produced and signed by all political parties to verify their accuracy. These SOPs were displayed in public locations outside polling stations. Ballot boxes were then sealed, with each contesting party affixing their own tamper-proof seal to the box, along with some other security measures specified by Guyanese electoral law. By the end of Election Day, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), local and international observers, the media and local individuals all had copies of the SOPs.

The tabulation process commenced at the ten (10) Returning Officers' offices and was moving smoothly, by the evening of 3 March, nine of the ten districts had been tabulated successfully. A large number of SOPs for the final (and largest) district had also been tabulated. The results showed the PPP leading by around 51,000 votes. The process then started to derail once it became clear that the Granger government was heading for defeat. Returning Officer Clairmont Mingo said he felt unwell and was taken to hospital, resulting in the tabulation being suspended for several hours while a replacement for Mingo was sought. That replacement then felt unwell so the tabulation did not restart. Meanwhile, a data entry clerk was found attempting to load SOPs using a suspect laptop and flash drive. Apart from attempts to delaying the declaration by the Returning Officers in Electoral Districts 3, 4, 5,6 and 7 only Returning Officer District 4, the largest populated District, tinkered with the process to such an extent that it was described as, 'the most clumsy attempt in rigging an election'.

There were several attempts to swear in Granger for a second term in office, for example on March 5, Granger addressed his supporters and thanked them for giving him another term. However, the PPP obtained a court injunction preventing the Region 4 returning officer from declaring the results until further verification had taken place. APNU+AFC continued preparations to swear in Granger.

On 11 March, the Supreme Court annulled the results of Region 4, ruled that a partial recount in the election must take place, ordering that Region Four continue verifying votes. According to the BBC, "Judge Roxane George also ruled the electoral body should not declare a winner before the recount is finished." She ordered that the tabulation be completed using official SOPs in the presence of party agents. All stakeholders maintained the need to let the tabulation reflects the will of the voters. The Chair of CARICOM and Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, led a team of five Caribbean Prime Ministers to mitigate the crisis on 11 and 12 March, meeting with Granger and opposition leader Bharrat Jagdeo. Following the development at the tabulation centre, on 14 March Mottley announced that, according to Stabroek News, "an independent high-level Caribbean Community team is [set] to supervise a full recount of the ballots cast in all ten regions at Guyana's elections based on an agreement by President David Granger and Opposition Leader Bharrat Jagdeo.

A five-person high-level team was rapidly assembled and arrived in Guyana on 15 March. GECOM prepared for the recount to start. However, an election candidate (in the concurrent regional elections) from the APNU+AFC party obtained a court objection blocking the recount and the CARICOM team left on 17 March, which prompted a statement from Prime Minister Mottley that "it is clear that there are forces in Guyana that do not want to see the votes recounted."

After almost two months, the recount started on 6 May. The Government placed strict limits on the number of recount stations that would be allowed, citing COVID-19 precautions. As a result, the planned 25 days for the recount was insufficient, but the recount was completed on the 8 June.

The results were publicly available, and almost exactly matched the SOPs in the possession of all the political parties and the observers. The results showed a victory for the PPP/C's presidential candidate with the PPP/C winning 33 seats in the National Assembly. APNU+AFC won 31 seats, and three of the smaller parties shared 1 seat in accordance with the agreement they made before the election.

Statements of Recount (SORs) were produced to mirror



the SOPs from Election Day. These SORs provided proof that the results announced by Mingo on March 13 had inflated APNU+AFC votes by 19,116 votes and reduced PPP/C votes by 3,689.

According to Guyana's constitution, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali was deemed president-elect, and his swearing in should follow the formal declaration of the winner by GECOM

It was on August 2, 2020, after 5 months of high drama and steadfast stakeholders at the Local, National, Regional and International levels, that the Chair of the Guyana Elections Commission announced Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali as the winner of the Presidential Elections. The Chancellor of the Judiciary, (Acting) administered the Oath of Office to Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali as Guyana's Eleventh President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. His Excellency, President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, made a commitment in his first address that Electoral Reform will be a major task on his Agenda so as to protect this Nation from experiencing such horrific, destabilizing and fraudulent electoral practices in future.

The Ministries of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, under the Ministerial leadership of the Hon Gail Texieria, MP and the Attorney General Chambers, under the Ministerial leadership of the Hon Mohabir Anil Nandlall, SC commenced preparation for the widest possible consultation in implementing His Excellency's commitment. The political parties, civil society, faith based, gender based, ethnic based and non-governmental organizations as well as everyone else were invited to make submissions for amendments, inclusions, deletion to the Representation of the People Act Chp 1:03 and the National Registration Act Chp. 19:08 Several submissions were received before the closing date, none- the- less, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance extended the deadline to encourage more submissions. After many submissions were tabulated and shared for further consultations another consultation was held at the Arthur Chung Conference Center at which open as well as direct invitations were extended. It was a well-attended activity and relevant oral as well as written submissions were incorporated into the drafts and presented for general debate in the parliament of Guyana.

The documents were debated and passed in the National Assembly in December, 2022 and were assented to by His Excellency, Dr. Ali on December 13, 2022 and gazetted on December 13, 2022. The approved amendments are in keeping with the commitment made by His Excellency and his government to prevent a reoccurrence of the illegal and undemocratic incidents between March 3 and August 1, 2020.

**Some of the major areas of focus in the Representation of the People Act Chp 1:03 include:**

- Criteria for the appointment of Polling Stations, access to physically challenged voters, number of voters per station, commuting distance for voters.
- Appointment of Polling, Counting Agents and Candidates to the Poll representing the interests of political parties.
- Dividing the large Electoral Districts, (Districts 3, 4 and 6) into Sub Districts to enhance management and reduce delays in communication results, as well as appointment of Supernumerary Returning Officer for each sub district.
- Clearly defined process of tabulating the results by Returning Officers / Supernumerary Returning Officers, using the Statement of Polls as well as posting results on GECOM’s website and the CEO’s declaration of the Results.
- Reaffirming that the CEO is an appointee of the Guyana Election Commission.
- Penalties were revisited, increased and introduce for all electoral offences by permanent as well as temporary staff of the Commission, as well as for members of the public and political parties’ representatives.
- Clarity was provided on the appointment of staff at GECOM, both permanent and temporary.
- Voting without an acceptable form of National Identification document was also strengthened by the legislation.

- Preparation of training manuals and other training materials.

**Some of the major areas of focus in the National Registration Act Chp 19:08 are as follows:**

- The Cycle of Continuous Registration, the long delays between each cycle and the preparation and distribution of national Identification Cards.
- The issue of “residency” was clarified in keeping with the Constitution.
- Continuous Registration is office based and field verification was also addressed.
- Source documents to facilitate National Registration was dealt with.
- Claims and Objections and Preliminary Voters’ List were also simplified.
- Treat with the particulars of persons alleged to be deceased was addressed.
- Penalties for Registration Offences were revised and introduce in areas where it was deemed necessary.

It is anticipated that these approved amendments will offer clear procedural as well as process guidance to all categories of elections officials at the Guyana Elections Commission, members of civil society, observer groups, political parties and their representatives as well as the general public. It is also envisaged that the “loop holes” which were exploited by those who were intent on committing electoral fraud would no longer be available. In my humble view, the process of electoral and registration reform is a continuous one and as situations and circumstances change, it will certainly require additional amendments to the legal framework, regulating these two (2) extremely important processes, in safe guarding this Nation’s democracy at the level of the Ballot boxes.

Finally, the PPP/C government, under the leadership of President Mohamed Irfaan Ali must be commended for bringing these relief legal measures in place.



*Mr. Ganga Persaud is a commissioner of the Public Service Commission. He is also a member of the Central Committee of the People’s Progressive Party and a Lecturer of the Guyana Learning Institute. He is the holder of a Master’s Degree in Management and Supervision, Bachelor’s Degrees in Public Management and Education.*

# The 1953 PPP Government



April 2023 marks 75 years since the historic PPP victory, the first to be held under universal adult suffrage. Prior to 1953, the franchise was restricted to only those with property and money. There was also a literacy requirement which effectively prevented a significant number of the electorate from exercising the right to vote.

The right to vote today is taken for granted but that was not always the case. And even that right was literally taken away from the Guyanese people by the PNC regime which rigged its way to power for nearly three decades.

According to Ashton Chase in his publication '133 Days towards Freedom in Guyana, April 27, 1953 will remain evergreen in the memory of many Guyanese. On that day several Guyanese quietly but resolutely struck a fierce blow at the forces of imperialism.

It is worth noting that the PPP, still a young and fledgling political party, won 18 of the 24 elected seats under the new constitution. It also gave the PPP the constitutional right to secure the six ministries. Six party leaders, namely, Cheddi Jagan, Forbes Burnham, Sydney King, J B Latchmansingh, Jainarine Singh and Ashton Chase were elected as Ministers.

The Ministerial system was new to Guiana. It was introduced for the first time as was the case of other colonies, but with limited powers. As pointed out by Rudy Luck, a prominent member and leader of the PPP at that time in a foreword to Chase's book wrote:

'Ashton Chase has written an admirable book. It consists above all, in its careful and detailed analysis of the work accomplished by each Ministry, of the legislation proposed to be passed by the PPP majority in the House of Assembly and of the inner workings and defects of the Waddington Constitution. This is an authoritative and as factual an account as will ever be written on so controversial a subject as the 133 days of the PPP while in office.

What emerges from this study? Above all, I suggest, the conclusion that the PPP Ministers, supported by their elected majority in the House of Assembly were implementing as far as possible the promises contained in the Election Manifesto, and that they were doing this in the face of steady, savage and unrelenting opposition and obstruction from the imperialist importers and their local lackeys; the sugar gods and big business.

Another conclusion inevitably emerges- that the Constitution was suspended, not on account of anything

wild or foolish done by the PPP but rather to prevent the PPP from carrying out its elections promises; for then the PPP would have justified and consolidated its influence in the minds of the people of the country.'

It is important to put the suspension of the Constitution in context of the cold war that was raging at the time and the desire of western vested interests to stifle the leftist 'baby' from its very birth.

Despite the many constraints, the PPP managed to score several important victories for the working-class in critical areas such as increases in the minimum wage especially for domestic servants, sawmill workers, cinema and hire-car workers among others. In addition, holidays with pay was receiving attention and the introduction of shift system especially for firemen and other categories who were forced to work long hours.

Significant measures were taken to improve the quality of education and health through the training of more nurses and teachers and in the case of education to end dual control of schools which for the most part was under the control and influence of the church.

But it was the attempted passage of the Labour Relations that in the words of Chase, that brought down the clouds. This bill was perceived as another 'communist measure even though it was patterned after similar legislation in Canada and the United States.

The purpose of the Bill was to secure by law and practice the right to freedom of association and the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively with employers. It was aimed at minimizing inter-union rivalry and preventing jurisdictional disputes from halting production in industry. It included two important provisions, one seeking to prohibit victimization of workers and compensation for any worker who was victimized and secondly, to provide for the right of trade union officials to visit the places of work for trade union members.

From all indications, the Bill touched 'King Sugar. As Chase puts it, 'to do anything in opposition to the vested interests of sugar was like playing bare-handed with a live electric wire. It shocks to death. Sugar kicks and kills and exterminates those who attempt to thread on its sugar profits.'

The biggest impact made was in the field of agriculture. One of the first action taken was to increase the price

of paddy and put in place measures to prevent the exploitation of farmers by Miller's. The Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Bill was enacted which sought to empower the District Commissioner not only to examine rice lands for the purpose of determining whether or not the landlord was observing the roles of good estate management but also to assess damages if necessary and to undertake works which should have been done by the landlord.

Dr. Cheddi Jagan, who apart from Chief Minister also held the portfolio of Minister of Agriculture during which he paid a visit to Suriname where he presented the case of fishermen to the Suriname Cabinet which agreed to set up a post on the Corentyne River which facilitated the granting of licences for Guyanese fishermen to fish in the Corentyne River. Before that, local fishermen were harassed and in some cases incarcerated by the Surinamese authorities. Dr. Jagan also raised the question of making the Corentyne River an international highway.

Significant progress was also made in the areas of drainage and irrigation. The PPP after careful consideration had sought to engage the services of Mr. Hutchinson, a distinguished engineer who had done useful work in Guiana but whose contract was not renewed by the colonial administration. He had already prepared several blueprints in what is known as the Hutchinson Schemes. Unfortunately attempts to get him to resume work failed as he had already committed himself to other engagements.

Another area in which much thought was put into by the PPP government was in housing. Several housing projects were already on stream in Liang Avenue and at La Penitence where 100 standard houses were slated for construction.

A number of cottage hospitals were earmarked for construction in Mahaicony on the East Coast of Demerara and another in Port Mourant Berbice. A nurse's hostel was also planned for New Amsterdam.

The above were by no means exhaustive but they do point in the direction of a people-oriented approach to development which had characterized all PPP/C administrations until the present time. It is indeed unfortunate that the PPP was not allowed to complete its full term in office but a pattern was already discernable, one in which the interests of the ordinary people was placed at centre stage.

It is important to correct several misconceptions regarding the reasons for the suspension of the Constitution and the overthrow of the PPP government. One was that the PPP was anti-British and anti-crown. It is true that the PPP refused to vote funds to send two delegates and their spouses to Jamaica on the occasion of the visit of Her Majesty the Queen and on invitation by the Governor of Jamaica. The real reason was however economic especially at a time of financial constraints and where every cent was necessary to put at the disposal of development.

There was also the issue of the repeal of the Undesirable Publications Ordinance which was the first to be repealed by the new PPP regime. The reason for the repeal of the Bill was to remove the suppression of civil liberties and not, as is being suggested, to facilitate the importation in British Guyana of communist literature.

The real reasons for the suspension of the Constitution was to prevent a working-class party from exercising power, regardless how limited that power was. The fact of the matter, as pointed out by Mr. Chase, was more a case of the PPP being in office but not in power. Power in British Guiana was exercised by the big capitalists led by the sugar lords and the big mining companies who together owned more than half of the country. They were encouraged and protected by the colonial state machinery.

The PPP was overthrown from office because of its bold and progressive policies. The PPP had even in its brief tenure introduced a number of qualitative changes. But at an even more fundamental level, it inspired in the Guianese people a sense of dignity and hope that a better life is possible.



*Hydar Ally is the holder of a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Guyana. He is the Author of two Publications, "Insightful Views on Guyana" and "Pragmatism or Opportunism: Guyana's Foreign Policy Behaviour". He is also Chairman of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre and a Central Committee member of the PPP.*

# US Foreign Policy and Attacks on China



Since the early part of the nineteenth century the US began to dream of world domination. On December 2, 1823, two hundred years ago, President Monroe of the United States proclaimed that the European powers must recognize the Western Hemisphere as the US sphere of influence. This was an early declaration of its intention to replace the old colonial powers and become the world's super power.

It began asserting itself in Latin America by the end of the 19th century and became more aggressive in the 20th century.

The United States emerged from the 2nd World War as the number one power. While the European powers had exhausted themselves on the battle field, the US was building up its economic and military might. It was hardly scratched during that war having entered the war almost at its end, in 1944, and being separated from Europe by the Atlantic Ocean.

The reconstruction of Western Europe created a great economic dependency on the United States. To consolidate that hold on Europe the US created a military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with two goals in mind. In passing, it was very lucrative for the military industrial complex since all NATO armies had to have the same type of weapons.

The first one was to keep Europe tied to its apron string. All of Western European countries military became subjected to the US within the NATO alliance.

The second reason was to be in position to try to defeat the one country which stood up for its sovereignty, the Soviet Union. Thus it launched the Cold War in the late 1940s. At that time it was the only country that possessed a nuclear weapon. Historians believed that the US used those destructive weapons on Japan in 1945 more as a blackmailing tool than was necessity to defeat Japan.

It began to confront every country that sought an independent path. War in Korea in the early 1950s, overthrow of the government of Iran and Guatemala in 1953/54. Supporting the British to crush the independence movement in the then British Guiana, now Guyana in 1953. Later the war in Vietnam and scores of others.

## China /US Relations

The US relation with China was more complex.

It was hostile to the Chinese revolution from its inception in 1949. It was US support that kept Taiwan, a part of China in a separate status, encouraging and instigating Taiwan to break away from China. The US influence kept

the People's Republic of China out of the United Nations for more than twenty years. The world had the ridiculous situation of Taiwan sitting in the UN as the representative of the Chinese people from 1949 to 1971.

However, during the 1970s as its struggles with the Soviet Union became more intense, it reduced its hostility to the PRC while at the same time keeping the Taiwan situation alive to be used as a tool against China whenever it so required. Moreover the seating of the PRC at the UN was difficult to halt as more colonies became independent and supported mainland China as the true representative of the Chinese people. That forced the US to retreat on that issue. It sought better relations with China as it focused its hostilities on the USSR.

That is why from the late 1970s when China adopted new strategies of opening up to accelerate its economic development from 1978 it did not meet very strong resistance from the US. China's opening up was seen as a great possibility for enhancing profits for US companies. For the PRC it was a necessary stage to build a strong working class and to acquire modern technologies to develop its economy.

China's economy began to grow rapidly and very soon it surpassed Europe and Japan to become the second largest economy in the world.

At the same time, in keeping with its internationalist philosophy, and its new position of opening up to the world, China began to create links with the rest of the world, both developed and developing countries.

For the developed countries China became one the main investment destination. China's and West Europe's economy and that of the US became very much linked. As China became stronger economically its investments began pouring into the economies of North America and Western Europe. Indeed China has become the largest holder of US government bonds. It was a true example of real mutual economic benefits for all concerned.

With developing countries the People's Republic of China began to assist, first the very poor countries. Those countries were the ones which could not get any loans from the International Financial Organizations. They were considered high risk countries and practically ignored by western governments.

It was those selfless assistance that raised China's reputation as a true friend to peoples in the developing

world, Africa in particular, which had the greatest need.

During that period, the US, from time to time criticised China. Those criticisms grew in hostility particularly after the 2008 global financial crisis.

In this period China's economic importance to the world economy became manifest. The PRC became the greatest driver of the international economy and the number one trading partner for most countries in the world.

From this time the relations with the US and the People's Republic of China began to encounter choppy waters.

### **US changed position on China**

The main reason for this was an unreasonable fear by the United States of China's growing economic strength and the goodwill that the PRC enjoyed from many developing countries which were previously deliberately underdeveloped by European Colonialism.

It is apposite to note that the expressed fear of China by the US was not because China was threatening any country militarily, nor because it attacked any state. It was China's successes in building a strong economy and because it has been helping poor countries to improve their productive capacity that gave China tremendous good will.

This was the same type of fear that started the Cold War. The US feared that the Soviet Union was going to overtake it economically and influence more countries to follow a socialist path of development. That they wanted to halt at all costs.

The west began a massive propaganda campaign against the PRC. Disinformation is being spread quite lavishly by the mainstream corporate news media. The whole idea was to create a false image of China as an exploitative state.

What they have clearly done is to dust off the materials that progressive forces used against the IMF and World Bank's imposition on poor developing countries and turned it against China. Terms such as 'debt trap', 'creating dependence' and 'imperialist imposition' are now being used by imperialism against China.

The reality has been vastly different.

China's loans to Africa and other Third World countries have been oriented towards building up the capacity for

more sustained economic growth. Those projects were all decided on by the countries that borrowed money and not imposed by China.

These include roads linking various parts of individual countries and also linking countries with each other. For instance Chinese built a railway from Adis Ababa, Capital of Ethiopia, all the way to the ports of Djibouti. This is because Ethiopia is land locked and that project has helped Ethiopia's foreign trade greatly.

We saw decades earlier the Tan-Zam railway which allowed Zambia to export its copper via Tanzania. That made it possible for Zambia to become less dependent on then apartheid South Africa. It allowed it to give support and solidarity to the African National Congress (ANC) during the battle for liberation of South Africa.

It is true that from time to time countries that borrow from China get into some problems with repayment. What has been China's response? Did it seize property of those countries as is being propagated by the West? No!

The facts debunk those attacks. All those who got into difficulties with the loans were supported by China. The PRC in the first place renegotiated the loans and gave the borrowing countries much more time to repay. That allowed the repayments to be made on much easier terms. It also allowed countries to pay their debts with produce that it has in abundance, thereby reducing pressures to repay in hard currency.

In other cases Chinese wiped off interest payment and in some cases even wiped off interest free loans of many countries including Guyana.

This was real help. Moreover, the Chinese made no political demands on those countries. It was aid and trade without strings. This is confirmed by all countries that do business with China. It is the finding of academics who study in depth China's role in the international economy, such as Professor Deborah Brautigam.

Compare that with what happens with IMF and World Bank. Whenever, a borrowing country got into repayment problems the IMF and World Bank impose much stiffer conditions on poorer countries. In most cases they demand privatization of state property at knockdown prices and pose all kinds of political stings. They even dictate what laws countries should make laws which were invariably unfavourable to the working people of those countries.



But that was not all. They demanded wage freeze and removal of subsidies to the poorest of the poor. The IMF/World Bank medicine created more complications for the developing world.

In almost all the cases they made things much worse for the masses than before. That is the reason for large protests against the IMF and World Bank in developing countries. Those oppressive impositions by Western controlled financial situations led to serious disruptions and hardships. Very often violent clashes occurred in which mainly the poor were shot. Governments become more repressive as they seek to fulfill IMF/World Bank conditionalities.

True over the last decade or so the multi lateral institutions began to do some debt write offs. That too was subject to conditionality. Most important though, is to note that more favourable conditions developed because of the new relations that China was known to be forging with Third world countries. That forced the imperialist states of US and Europe to make concessions to the developing world. It was an attempt to improve their own image and to try to maintain some influence in the developing world. Their objective is to try to displace China in the Third World. They fear competing with that socialist state.

The US has been making no secret of their intentions. At the last G7 meeting, the US urged that the other rich capitalist countries to build up a fund to lend the poor countries mainly in Africa. At that meeting they had announced that they had some \$600 Billion to lend to the Third World.

On the face of it this seems laudable. However, they have left nothing to the imagination. They announced publicly that its main purpose was to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative which is attracting more and more participants. Therefore, it is clear that development of poor countries is not a priority for the G-7 countries. Most important is the countering of China's influence as a friend of the peoples of the developing countries.

Despite the propaganda offensive of the West against China and their belated attempts of the G-7 to 'assist' poor countries, the PRC's reputation as a reliable partner and a real friend to the developing countries continue to grow. As China's reputation grows, the US hostility to her has increased.

The US has now begun applying economic sanctions on China. In order to slow down the PRC's progress the US has banned the selling of computer chips and other technologies to the PRC. China's leading high tech companies are now being barred from the US market. Companies such as Huawei and Tic Tok are subjected to bans and other restrictions. Many of the Chinese exports are subjected to high tariffs.

In addition, the US has been using its political and military influence to force Europe and the United Kingdom to ban Chinese companies. It is also pressuring other countries to stop their ties with China. Some succumb to such pressures but in most cases the Third World values China's friendship.

Attacks on China are not confined to the politics and economics but they have been upping the ante on the military front of recent.

The United States continues to arm Taiwan, a breakaway province of China, and to instigate that regime to adopt a hostile position to the PRC. They have also imposed themselves in the South China Sea where they have taken a lot of military hardware and their well-equipped Navy. The main aim is to retard China's progress by threatening it militarily.

It is clear that they hope to push China into an arms race, similar to what they did to the Soviet Union, in the hope of exhausting her and forcing it to spend more on defense. Using this method they believe that they will be able to slow down China's spending on the welfare of its people on the one hand and to restrict the PRC's assistance to the Third World countries thus reducing its popularity.

Clearly the US is very scared of China. Not because it believes that China wants to dominate the world militarily. No. the main reason is the example that China has become for many countries in the world. It shows that another road to freedom is possible and very viable.

What they cannot appreciate is that China has strong anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonistic positions. These are philosophical positions of the Government of Beijing. Therefore, it cannot become imperialistic despite how strong it becomes economically. Its philosophy orients her to seek partnerships and building friendships with all peoples and cultures, to promote peace and development through trade and cultural links between peoples. It is one of solidarity with the less fortunate of the world. This position is rooted in its Marxist World outlook and in its own Chinese culture. The Chinese saying that "the rising tide must float all boats" is a guide to China's assistance. This is not a policy that seeks domination, it remains anti-imperialistic.

The policy of peaceful co-existence has been an unchanging principle of Beijing. It is not a tactic but a strategy for building sound international relations.

It is time that the US review its positions on China and abandon its irrational fears. It is important that doctrines as the Munroe doctrine be discarded and for the US to find strength in its own history as it once fought against European colonialism.

Replacing European Colonialism by US world domination is not tenable in our times!



*Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper and other publications.*

# 'RATHER DIE FREEMEN THAN LIVE AS SLAVES'

## IDEOLOGY AND CONTEXT

### THE 1763 BERBICE REBELLION



*'If (we) must bleed let it all come at once. (We) cannot be more oppressed than (we) have been; (we) cannot suffer greater cruelties than (we) have already. Rather die freemen than live as slaves.'* (Henry Garner)

This article seeks to explore some aspects of the Caribbean anti-slavery movement in general but, in particular, the 1763 self-liberating activities of the enslaved Africans on the Berbice plantations.

After some considerable time Caribbean scholars have eventually succeeded in persuading their northern colleagues of the relevance of the anti-slavery movement in the Caribbean which predated any such movement in Europe, and/or North America. This was a significant victory for those interested in correcting the several distortions which have prevented the proper understanding of the realities of plantation slavery and the self-liberating efforts of the captive Africans enslaved on these plantations.

Plantation slavery was one of the most horrendous forms of tyrannical rule in modern history. It was the embodiment of the worse excesses of a depraved age. Not only did it exploit and abuse one class of humanity for a period in excess of two hundred years but also throughout its existence, it brutally suppressed any and all expression of disaffection on the part of the outraged victims. The plantation, the New World theatre in which this horrid historical episode was enacted, was to all intents and purposes a large-scale commercial system of inhuman barbarity and socio-economic exploitation in which the enslaved African was brutalised, debauched and slaughtered. Disaffection or resistance of any kind was encountered by a variety of severe responses including the lash, the branding iron, or some other more excruciating form of torture, dismemberment and death.

Let us therefore examine this relationship more closely. It was a barbaric and reprehensible connection in which the unequal distribution of power and influence was the

monopoly of the master class. The slave-master was all-powerful and the enslaved, officially, all-powerless. Both law and custom favoured the master. The social system allowed the master to frame the laws which governed that relationship. He also adjudicated instances of an infringement whether he was the accuser or the accused. For much of this epoch, the enslaved was not deemed human enough to enjoy the basic right of testifying on his/her behalf and most certainly not against the white master.

Throughout this period, the myth that a master would not do injury to an important factor of production, his slave, enjoyed considerable currency. It was absurd, they argued, to believe that European masters, who had come from civilised societies, and were therefore civilised human beings, would abuse their own slaves, their personal property. Civilised people, they continued, did not maltreat their own animals, or tools, or implements, or machinery; why then would they be cruel to their slaves who represented an expensive asset with a market value of several hundred pounds?

It is interesting, however, to note, that, even in these modern times, society finds it necessary to maintain, and increasingly expand the scope and range of instruments and institutions for the prevention of cruelty, injury, or serious harm to animals, humans, and property, private or public. Certainly no one argues against the existence in our midst of the perverse, the depraved, the malicious, and the insane. One look at the slave laws of any slave society should be enough to convince anyone that the overwhelming inequalities within the system of slavery were certainly conducive to the production of all such persons, in increasingly large numbers.

But entirely apart from these considerations, cruelty was an integral part of the slave system. So that when we argue that the enslaved rebelled against the unmitigated cruelties of the system and pretend that they were rebelling against one aspect of the whole, and not the entire system of slavery as we were once inclined to do, and some are still inclined to do, we were and they are indulging in half-truths or worse, intellectual dishonesty. The argument pertaining to the master's interest in his property would perhaps apply with some force, if enslaved Africans were indeed horses, or pianos or automobiles. But, in spite of all the denigration and anti-human mythology, the reality remained that enslaved Africans were human beings: men, women and children.

Slavery was systematised cruelty. The enslaved were virtual machines to be driven to inhuman extremes for the production of profit, and machines of an intelligent nature which had to be terrorised, chained, beaten, tortured, maimed, and murdered in order that the master might secure huge profits and retain physical dominance

over the abused chattel. And because the enslaved African was all too human he lived for vengeance and his vengeance did not sleep. Even if we agree to discount all other forms and acts of a vengeful nature, designed to destroy the system of plantation slavery, we would still be left with the telling truth that even with all the odds stacked against them, the enslaved African was rebellious property. Slave rebellions were a regular and ever-recurring phenomenon of the plantation system.

It is always interesting to note how, even as the slave master argued eloquently about the innate cowardice or stupidity or docility or contentment of the enslaved African, he nevertheless maintained a whole series of devices and laws which he considered necessary for keeping the enslaved in bondage.

Armed might was the main instrument of oppression. This included the construction of forts and barricades, the employment of large military forces and the presence of a legally enforceable ratio of armed whites on every plantation. Professor Beckles argues that 'slave societies were constructed with violence and were maintained by the systematic application of violence'. The slave master was always prepared to execute unthinking acts of violence against the enslaved. The enslaved understood this and were not themselves reluctant to execute planned violence of their own against their oppressors.

It is, however, important to realise that the space available to the enslaved was severely limited. None might possess arms. It was illegal to teach an enslaved African how to read or write. Writing or saying anything with a tendency to create unrest among the enslaved was a serious crime. No enslaved African could buy or sell or trade anything without the permission of the master. The enslaved could not assemble without the presence of whites. For much too long a period they could not testify in any court in any case involving a white person, not even in their own defence. As if these were not enough, there existed also a large body of non-statutory regulations and customs in motion with the expressed intention of maintaining and enforcing subordination. Then there was the policy of division among the enslaved on the basis of occupation, place of origin, ethnicity, colour and status created and imposed by the master. There was also the mythology of the superiority of the European as against the African's innate inferiority

Professor Aptheker reports that, 'Slavery being violative of central religious concepts...required an elaborate rationalism. Racism provided this rationalism'. Fundamental to this rationalisation was the idea at first of the actual sub-humanity of the African. When persistence with this theme became impossible, it was altered to affirm the inherent, indelible and significant superiority of the master class. In the final analysis

and in spite of the forcefulness with which these myths were advocated, the rebellious nature of the enslaved African and his efforts to assert his humanity and destroy the system of enslavement never wavered. The self-liberation struggle of the enslaved African was an ongoing process unaffected by the countervailing measures adopted by the slave master.

The old European myth that the slave population was a contented work force has at last been dispelled. There is no longer any doubt that the enslaved African waged a consistent and unrelenting war against his enslavement. It must never be forgotten that this new awareness of self and heritage owes much to all those enslaved Africans who, refusing to be intimidated by the savagery of the system or the military might of the master class or the insidious mythology of the negrophobic European intellectual movement, asserted their humanity, irrespective of the cost. 'If (we) must bleed let it all come at once. (We) cannot be more oppressed than (we) have been; (we) cannot suffer greater cruelties than (we) have already. Rather die freemen than live as slaves.' (Henry Garner)

The 1763 Berbice rebellion is one of the most convenient and relevant case studies of self-liberating activities of the enslaved African in Plantation America. Firstly, this is because it possessed many of the revolutionary elements consistent with self liberating activities throughout human history. It is also an important instance because here, in 1763, enslaved Africans in undisguised and unmitigated fashion refuted all the European myths surrounding the enslavement and subordination of the captive African in the plantation environment. Thirdly, the Berbice rebellion offers abundant scope to illustrate the consistency with, and the variety of ways in which the enslaved attacked the system. The Berbice revolt offers undisputed documentary evidence of the unbridled fear which permeated plantation society and the consequential cowardice of the master class in the face of revolutionary activity by the enslaved population. Finally, it was one of those few instances in which the overwhelming majority of the enslaved, with but few abstentions, demonstrated their rejection of their enslavement. The Berbice Rebellion was only exceeded in length of time by the successful 1791 Saint Domingue Revolution.

Berbice was a Dutch colony established by private entrepreneurship in 1627. While, in general, the Dutch West India Company which enjoyed monopoly rights on the Guiana coast preferred, as in Essequibo, to engage in trade in native goods rather than embarking on colonisation, the indications are that the Van Peres, with chartered rights to Berbice, were inclined towards the more settled and reliable process of agricultural production and hence colonisation. They therefore,

while not totally indifferent to the trade in native commodities, encouraged a farming economy for export trade. The Berbice economy, in spite of its ambitions and pretensions, seldom exceeded the bounds of subsistence agriculture. Nevertheless, the colony expanded slowly and consistently.

For about a hundred years Berbice seemed incapable of attracting aggressive capital investment, was forever short of labour and, very often, was deprived of the bare necessities for day-to-day sustenance. An underdeveloped colonial outpost, severely undercapitalised, could not afford the military capability to resist a sustained attack from a resolute foe. This factor was well-known throughout the region and was often remarked upon by the rebellious enslaved population. It was not surprising therefore that the colony was easy prey to every European marauder patrolling Caribbean waters. These attacks aggravated the retardation in an economy already suffering the worst effects of undercapitalisation and a general lack of enterprise.

As late as 1700, Berbice had still not shown any of the signs of a flourishing plantation economy associated with the smaller Caribbean islands which had experienced the so-called sugar revolution after 1650. The 1700s, however, brought encouraging changes to Berbice. In 1712, the French executed a successful raid on Berbice and the Van Peres could or would not honour the ransom demanded of 100,975 guilders. The note was eventually picked up by a group of businessmen who paid over the renegotiated sum of 100,000 guilders and therewith acquired title to the colony. (The Van Peres, reluctant to give up their Berbice enterprise, paid one fourth of this sum and consequently retained substantial interests in the colony). In 1720 the new owners established a joint-stock company, the Berbice Association, with a preferred working capital of 8,000,000 guilders. It issued instructions to the Commander of Berbice, demanding the immediate and rapid expansion of the plantation system, greater diligence in the extension of their duties, increased efficiency and the production of larger profits. This indication of aggressive enterprise seemed to have had the desired affect for in 1722 alone, at least nine large plantations, Cornelia, Dagaraad, Debora, Elizabeth, Harbanbroek, Hologande, Jacoba, Johanna and Sevonette, were established.

In 1732 the Berbice Association issued an invitation to new investors, streamlined its fiscal policies, rehabilitated Fort Nassau, constructed Fort St. Andries and introduced a semi-representative system of administration in the colony. These measures seemed productive of much success for by the 1740s Berbice was transformed into a flourishing plantation economy with a rapidly expanding slave population. The available evidence suggests that there were about 131 plantations: 120 private and 11

company plantations, producing coffee, cocoa, cotton and some sugar.

The population included 256 Europeans, 204 Amerindians and 3,000 enslaved Africans. By 1762 the population had grown to about 4,423, consisting of 346 Europeans, 244 Amerindians and 3,833 enslaved Africans. Fort Nassau and New Amsterdam had, within their boundaries, 30 Europeans, 150 enslaved Africans and 10 Indian slaves. While the Colony plantations possessed 40 Europeans, 1,061 Africans and 30 Indian slaves, the private plantations had 216 Europeans, 2622 enslaved Africans and 204 enslaved Indians. In all there were about 60 soldiers attached to Forts Nassau and St Andries and the brandwagt located at the Abary. It is, however very possible that the population might have been larger, but since evasion of the capitation tax, payable on each slave over the age of six, was popular among the planter community, official statistics, at the best of times, tended to be misleading.

It is immediately important to note that the expansion in the population of the enslaved produced a situation in which there were about 30 enslaved per plantation. This was by normal Caribbean standards a small plantation population, but the fact that the Black/White population ratio was 15/1 was nevertheless as significant in Berbice as it would have been in Barbados. What was more, the evidence suggests that while 15/1 might have been the average ratio, the reality was even more graphic with instances of from 20/1 to as much as 83/1. The fact that absenteeism stood at a possible 40 per cent compounded the significance of these figures, for while the Dutch planters seldom cared for the welfare of their enslaved producers, in the absence of owners, attorneys and overseers tended to ravage the enslaved population to an even greater extent than did the planters.

Of some considerable importance also was the fact that there existed in Berbice at the time a more than average depravity among the managerial class. Thus the Governor felt justified in complaining that 'the burgher and their wives use all sorts of filthy, slanderous, malicious language more than one would expect from the lowest scum, with not a single person there worthy of respect'. On another occasion he observed how they revealed 'their low origins through their morals and conduct and sin against the simplest and most notorious forms of justice equity'. The implications for the type of measures adopted by most of these whites for the preservation of peace, order and profitable production, given the overwhelming nature of the enslaved population, can best be imagined.

The expansion of the export economy, the excessive demands this made of the mass of the enslaved, the ongoing process of declining general rations and daily

supplies, the harsh and arbitrary nature of plantation regimen and build up of disaffection, particularly among those recently arrived from Africa, were all productive of the evolution of the culture of rebelliousness and self-liberation. And, indeed, there were obvious signs of greater rebelliousness among the enslaved. These included an increase in the incidence of insubordination, insolence, and flight, and in rumours of the imminent outbreak of serious revolts.

The enslaved might not have staged massive frontal assaults on the plantation and its white ruling class on a daily basis, but even so, it is important not to underestimate the efficiency of the simple and ordinary day-to-day acts of indiscipline, rebelliousness and revenge through which the enslaved inflicted considerable damage on the plantation economy.

Such frequent acts as birth control, sluggish attitudes, feigning stupidity, illness and, or, resignation, suicides, the retention and utilisation of significant aspects of the African parent cultures constituted an ongoing drain on the profitability, viability and, eventually, the continued existence of many a plantation. The morbid negrophobia of the slave master's ideology was such that this level of revolutionary consciousness could not be imagined much less recognised.

Nevertheless, the trend was unmistakable. Masters complained of the lowered quality of captives shipped to the colony. They observed that the enslaved seemed weaker, less productive, more prone to becoming ill than usual and in general more difficult to control. The master also complained that the recent arrivals seemed more inclined to be arrogant, obstreperous, and less reverent in tone and general demeanour. They were more demanding and more strident in registering their demands. But, to those who were insensitive to revolutionary ardour, these were no more than an exaggeration in these recent arrivals of the several ethnic flaws which the slave master was forever attributing to the African.

So far the focus has been concentrated on conditions productive of a revolutionary tradition on the Berbice plantations. Now it will shift to an examination of revolutionary behaviour on the part of the enslaved African. In the beginning, rebellions took the form of small-scale skirmishes, aimed at harrying and wearing down the resistance and resolve of the Europeans whom the enslaved African knew were forever on the verge of panic and instant flight. The rebelliousness of the Africans grew in its intensity as they became more determined in their resolve to strike a decisive blow for their freedom. In 1733, there was a small rebellion on the Canje in which only two overseers were killed. In 1740, the enslaved at Plantation Petershof failed in a

bid to take over the estate. In 1752, the enslaved on Plantation Switzerland revolted and it was necessary to call up the Amerindian reserves to contain the spread and the success of the disaffected. Then in July 1762 the enslaved on plantations Goed Land and Goed Fortuin broke out, threatening to destroy the European economy on the Canje.

By 1763 the enslaved Africans had tested the system and were more than familiar with its strengths and its weaknesses. It was obvious to the more perceptive and militarily inclined among them that there were many factors favourable to a successful overthrow of the white ruling class.

The first such factor was a prolonged epidemic, possibly dysentery, which had been raging since about 1756 with but very short periods of respite. It is contended that the disease originated among the Europeans, initially attacked the enslaved population but subsequently confined itself to the Europeans who seemed incapable of developing a sufficiently strong resistance to the infection. In 1762, for instance, the European population suffered heavy losses both in fatalities and in migration to escape the worst effects of the disease. The infection decimated the membership of the Court of Policy, the European staff managing the plantations and the military. Even the Governor and senior officials had not escaped the ravages of the raging sickness. The European population had noticed the rapid build-up of an African immunity to the disease and had, in the circumstances, become increasingly concerned and nervous about their continuing vulnerability. Alvin Thompson, with scholarly precision wrote of 'an epidemic of war in the midst of an epidemic of sickness...' a two-edged sword which wrought havoc among the whites.

Another factor which favoured a successful revolt was the state of the colony's defences. The Dutch, with but isolated exceptions, were always reluctant to take the state of colonial defences seriously. More often than not, their colonial defences were in an advanced state of deterioration, undermanned, poorly armed and, therefore, woefully inadequate. In the 1760s the colonial defences of Berbice suffered from all the accustomed Dutch defects, which the epidemic did not improve. At one point the combined strength of Fort St Andries and Fort Nassau did not exceed eighteen demoralised and poorly armed mercenaries.

Fort Nassau was in an advanced state of disrepair and dilapidation. Dutch colonial defences, where they existed in Berbice, tended to depend on European mercenaries whose commitment to the defence of the colony always depended on the potential for success and the generosity of the rewards. In Berbice where they were outnumbered and underpaid, their morale was low and

their reliability highly questionable. In 1751, 1756 and 1759 these troops had demonstrated their unreliability by indulging in various acts of insubordination and in several attempts to desert their post. That they could not be depended upon for the resolute defence of the colony was the current belief.

Dutch colonial defences also relied on the use of Amerindian allies. This was the European's most reliable and effective weapon of armed containment. However, the Akawois, on whom Berbice depended, were engaged in a prolonged tribal conflict which considerably reduced their availability for service against the Africans in the event of a revolt. There was also the belief that many of them, fearful of contracting the European illness, had migrated out of the area.

Inadequacies in food supply and the general necessities were an unhappy reality of the Dutch experience in Berbice. This resulted in the periodic stopping of allowances and rations which the enslaved population considered a legitimate expectation. But during this period there seemed to have been, even by Dutch standards, an unusually prolonged period of shortages in Berbice. The 1756 Seven Years' War had severely disrupted trading relations between the Netherlands and her colonies. 1762, on the other hand, was the year of a severe European winter when ships were delayed from leaving Dutch harbours. When these ships did eventually arrive in the colonies, the supplies were discovered to have suffered a high rate of spoilage and, as a consequence, the shortage persisted in spite of the arrival of ships from Europe.

Additionally, it does seem that the crew of many of these ships preferred to give Berbice a wide berth, fearing exposure to the epidemic raging in the port. Ongoing shortages tended to sour, to an even greater degree, rancorous relations between the master and the enslaved and it was no different in Berbice.

Another factor favourable to the cause of the enslaved population was the overwhelming preponderance of the slave mass. The ratio averaged 15/1, but in reality there were many instances where it reached as high as 30/1. What was more, in the recent expansion of the slave population, there had been a gradual but noticeable build-up in the percentage of Africans belonging to certain ethnic groupings. This was particularly noticeable among the Akans, Guangos, Congos, and Angolans. There prevails to this day a notion that the Akans were particularly hostile to enslavement. In the Caribbean, they represented a military class determined to overthrow the European master class. But generally, an increase in the African majority, irrespective of the particular ethnicity, was productive of revolutionary aspirations among the slave class. Recently arrived

Africans tended always to seek immediate release from their enslavement. They were therefore not reluctant nor indeed afraid to strike out against the system which held them in captivity and those who managed that system. Since they were openly hostile to their oppressors, the slave master intensified his use of harsher measures to maintain plantation discipline. Not surprisingly, more extreme methods of repression only aggravated tensions in slave society.

The rapid expansion of the enslaved population had not only provided for the consolidation of ethnic groupings in the colony but also had placed revolutionary leadership at the disposal of the slave mass. It can be argued, with considerable justification, that Kofi, Akara and Atta made the Berbice Revolution. In 1763 the leadership of the enslaved population of Berbice consisted mostly of privileged slaves, whether their authority or influence had been earned on the plantation or had been transported with them across the Atlantic. Some had since their arrival in the colony become artisans; others were known to possess military competence, while still others seemed to have been recognised as possessing noble lineage. Most of them were unassimilated Africans. Kofi has been presented as a Creole, but even he might have been brought to Berbice from Africa while yet a child.

It now seems clear that the first half of the eighteenth century, which had created conditions conducive to the expansion of the plantation system in the New World, had also seen the plantation survive the increasing rebelliousness among the slave population. In 1733, there were slave uprisings both in Berbice and the Danish island of St. John. In the same year the Maroons of Jamaica liberated themselves. In 1734, there was a serious outbreak in the Bahamas. In 1736, the enslaved in Antigua sent shock waves throughout the Caribbean. In 1760, Tacky waged war in Jamaica. In 1761, the Djukas and in 1762, the Saramakas of Surinam emancipated themselves. In 1749, 1752 and again in 1762 the enslaved population in Berbice had tested their chains. In addition 14 rebellious plots were uncovered. Then towards the end of 1762 there was the trauma of a rumour of a planned rising of all the enslaved in Berbice. Thompson declares that all these developments seemed to be reaching a climax in 1763, 'and it is indicative of the slaves' revolutionary consciousness that they did not let the hour of opportunity go by without striking a blow for freedom'. (Thompson: 1987, 156).

In 1763 there were individuals in Berbice who recognised the signs of impending doom, but in the main those matters which the slaves took careful reckoning of were ignored by the Dutch authorities. One may well ask why was this so? For one thing the master undoubtedly came to believe in his own mythology that slaves, being

chattel, were incapable of deductive reasoning and devoid of a political consciousness. In reality, however, the enslaved made definite political analysis of the power structures which oppressed them and against which they waged a relentless war. Most of all they understood that time was a critical political factor in this struggle. They appreciated the strategic options of observing, waiting, probing and assessing. In short, the Berbice slaves, like enslaved everywhere, had cultivated a culture of resistance and in 1763 they planned for total liberation.

Noting the vulnerability of the master class, the Berbice slaves planned their war of liberation. There is considerable time and space devoted to what might or might not have been the specific cause or causes of this rebellion. There is, however, the danger that a preoccupation with determining this element in the liberation process often obscures the fundamental issues. For one thing, it seems that there is still a tendency to deny to the enslaved African certain basic human qualities. Why is it so difficult to accept that the enslaved, in common with all other human beings, could observe trends in their environment, collect and weigh evidence, plan revolutionary action in the light of such assessment and execute mass action?

Then again there is the reluctance to concede the slaves' ability to be motivated by abstract principles and values such as liberty and freedom. As a consequence, there is the tendency to associate every act of rebellion with some form of material deprivation. The argument then is that some physical/material irritant, having become unbearable, produces the rebellion. In these circumstances, the demands of the slaves are reduced to the mere supply of a little more food, some physical improvements in the environment, the sacking of this particular overseer here and/or that particular driver there. This having been accomplished, the enslaved is once again happy in his environment and will not prove ungovernable again until another irritant disturbs his plantation idyll.

Enslavement was objectionable and the enslaved waged a persistent struggle for the destruction of the system. The plantation represented their prison and always the ultimate objective of mass action on the part of the enslaved was to destroy that prison or at least to gain control of it. Maltreatment, physical violence and worse features were basic to the system of plantation slavery. The enslaved understood only too well that these abuses would not be eradicated until the system of slavery was itself destroyed. They therefore planned its destruction.

The 1763 Berbice Revolt was to be a general uprising: the aim was their freedom on a territory of their own. (Velzing: 1991, 3). There can be no denying the fact that

in 1763 the enslaved planned a war of total liberation. They chose Kofi and Akara as their respective political and military leaders. They planned with great care and were determined that they should not fail. Their plan, in keeping with the general objective, encompassed all the Berbice plantations. The precise timing of the revolt is open to question; not even the subsequent trials provided that information. There was an outbreak on the 23 February by some 70 plus slaves of Plantation Magdalenenburg and Providence on the Canje River, but this was of limited duration. The whites, fearing for their lives, abandoned the plantations and departed on board a ship in the Berbice River for Fort Nassau, thence to Demerara and further a field.

The rebels ransacked the plantations, confiscated the arms and ammunition, but rather than holding the plantations, some proceeded to Berbice to make the revolution, while others retreated towards the Corentyne. It is possible that they intended to join forces with the recently emancipated Surinam Djukas and Salamancas, but even this is not certain. The records suggest that the remaining rebels engaged in light skirmishes in the middle reaches of the Canje and on the Corentyne, unrelated to, but after the real Berbice revolt had started. By the middle of the year nearly all the estates on the Canje had been won over by the rebel forces.

Two issues are, however, very important at this juncture. The first was the inability of the Dutch Commandeur, Simon Van Hoogenheim, to outfit an expedition large enough to challenge seriously the Canje rebels. After some lengthy delay he could muster no more than at best twelve sailors, reluctant to engage the rebels in a straight fight. They garrisoned themselves at Plantation Stevenburg, the southernmost plantation, refusing to offer any assistance, military or otherwise, to any of the other Canje plantations. The second point of interest was the fact that Kofi, in Berbice, neither participated in nor apparently knew, not until much later, of the outbreak of this Canje revolt.

The general revolt broke out on the Berbice River on Sunday, February 27. The rebels encountered little opposition from a panic-stricken planter class and in short shrift took the major plantations: Lelienburg, Juliana, Hollandia, Zeelandia, Elizabeth and Alexandria.

There was one significant encounter with the whites. This occurred on March 4, at Plantation Peerboon, where the enslaved succeeded in routing the whites. In a little over a month the majority of the Berbice plantations had passed into the control of the rebels. At this point Akara dispatched an expedition, under Fortuin, to the Canje, where he enlisted the Canje rebels and proceeded to drive the remaining white planters out. Canje therefore

passed into the hands of the rebels in very much the same manner as had most of Berbice. Governor Van Hoogenheim, with some of the panic-stricken white population, took refuge at Fort Nassau, but soon realising the hopelessness of their position, retreated to Plantation Dageraad, and finally, to the dilapidated Fort St Andries. At this point the enslaved had taken control of all Upper Berbice.

Having emancipated themselves and taken the upper Berbice for their own, the Africans set about establishing administrative and military structures. The seat of government was, at first, located at Plantation Hollandia thence at the Fort. Kofi was installed as Commandeur and he was assisted by a Council consisting of Akara, Atta, Frans van Staaden, Derent, and Nouakou, most of whom had so far distinguished themselves in the struggle. The military establishment consisted of captains, lieutenants, ensigns and ordinary soldiers recruited from those who had actively engaged the enemy.

It would seem that the first really serious problems arose within the ranks of the rebel forces at this point. For some of these appointments appeared to have been made along ethnic lines. Additionally, it would seem that some of the rebels were expected to remain on the plantations as field labourers. They perceived themselves, and might have been so perceived by some elements of the leadership, as having been returned to slavery. It is possible that this fate was reserved for the Creoles on the Company plantations, many of whom were reluctant to embrace revolutionary action, but the records seem to be suggesting that this was also the fate of the Gaungos and perhaps, the Congos as well.

It is, however, important to realise that the rebels had conceived of a plan to keep the export economy functioning. This was undoubtedly an excellent idea, but the fact that some sections of the rebel forces were, as a consequence, made to feel inferior as a result of their being once again enslaved created fissures in the rebel forces which could not easily be resolved. It is doubtful whether this strategy had been sufficiently discussed before the actual February outbreak. Even if it was, the indications are that it could not have received popular support.

The second area of serious concern centred on Kofi's decision to negotiate with the Europeans, rather than wipe them out as seemed to have been the original plan.

A certain parson, Rev. Jonas Van Peterson Ramering, was at this stage, around March 8, chosen as the first bearer of a dispatch from Kofi to van Hoogenheim explaining the context and nature of the revolt. Subsequently, a Ms Schreuder did the same, and, as befitting a lady, perhaps conveyed more conciliatory terms.

Thus the process of negotiations began. Akara was unhappy that Kofi had chosen to negotiate with the whites whose vulnerability was obvious to everyone. This departure from the original plan to destroy the white population, when this objective could have been so easily and quickly accomplished, created further areas of disagreement among the rebels. Lesser leaders like Accabre, Atta, Gousari and Prins found Kofi's deviation incomprehensible and dissension quickly spread among the ranks of the rebels. It is possible that as many as six other letters followed over a period of several months. The complete history of the revolt has not yet been written and as a consequence there are still several grey areas in the explanations. What we do know with some amount of certainty, however, is that letters were dispatched on 8 March, 3, 4, and 27 April, 9 May, 27 July and, 2 and 7 August, but there might well have been others of which we have no knowledge at this time.

Without intending to be judgemental, it is nevertheless interesting to observe the diplomatic retreat of Governor Kofi as he tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a settlement with the Dutch Governor. In the full flush of the initial successes Kofi, in his first letter, ordered Van Hoogenheim to leave the colony or encounter the full wrath of the rebels. He declared all slaves free and promised that the rebels would never suffer enslavement again. One month later, however, he was not quite as definitive and offered to share the territory with the Dutch: 'Kofi will give Your Highness half of Berbice and all the slaves will go upriver', but once again warning... 'don't think that they will remain slaves'. Still one month later, he offered to restore some of the plantations to the Dutch. By August, he capitulated almost completely, offering to keep but four of the several plantations taken in the struggle.

The Governor, once the process had begun, never seriously entertained the idea of a truce with Kofi. Van Hoogenheim obviously welcomed the space provided by negotiations, extended the process for as long as it took to recruit adequate military assistance from various sources, enhance the defensive capability of the ramshackle Fort St Andries, and restore the morale of the panic-stricken European population. He petitioned the Director-General of Demerara, Storm Van's Gravesande, who immediately sealed off the border, the Abary, between Berbice and Essequibo-Demerara. He also dispatched a strong force, consisting of Caribs, Akawois and some European soldiers, to harass the flanks of the rebels. While the negotiations were deliberately prolonged over all these months, assistance also came from Surinam, St Eustatius, Barbados and Holland. Throughout it all van Hoogenheim so fashioned his responses, that Kofi was encouraged to think that he, like the Jamaican and Surinam maroons before him, would achieve an amicable settlement with the European master class.

It is instructive to note the state of the European defences at the beginning of the negotiating process and observe the slow but inevitable reconstitution of these forces during the protracted period of military diplomacy. It was not until around May 11, that the first detachment of reinforcements, 146 soldiers and some thirty sailors, arrived from St Eustatius. That these were to prove spineless was immaterial for by their mere presence they would have bolstered the courage of the hopeless Dutch refugees under the command of Van Hoogenheim. Then on July 7, further assistance arrived from St Eustatius: this time about forty soldiers. From the Netherlands came some fifty soldiers in May and an additional 410 soldiers in three well-armed vessels. Finally, sometime later a detachment of 600 soldiers in five heavily armed vessels placed themselves under the command of the Dutch Governor. It is important to note, however, that the last two did not arrive in the colony until November and Old Year's Day 1763. By this time the initiative had passed from the rebels to the formerly beleaguered Dutch party. Hence mopping-up operations begun earlier were intensified in the New Year.

The irony of the 1763 rebellion was the fact that the rebels came so very close to total victory. The Europeans, besieged at Fort St Andries, were a panic-stricken, debilitated, cowardly lot, over whom the Governor had little effective command. Few of the Burgher Captains, and even fewer of the European military officers, were prepared to engage the rebels, or indeed remain at their posts. One senior functionary, having mutinied, remarked: 'I cannot get enough for myself and my wife, and don't feel bound to stand and be shot at for twenty guilders a month'. The European community was in disarray, convinced that their position could not be defended and that the rebels would offer them no mercy. One commentator remarked that in all there were but two brave men among the Dutch party – the Governor and Burgher-Captain Abbensetts. Up to the point of the commencement of the negotiations, the Europeans had mustered no defence of their holdings. It needed but one final assault by the rebels to push the white community out of Berbice.

Additionally, fortune favoured the rebels, as the European community, between May and August, suffered another serious bout of the raging sickness and once again their numbers depleted and the community demoralised. On May 29, Van Hoogenheim reported that, of his small party, more than 100 had been seriously affected by the disease. Subsequently, he reported that an entire detachment, sent to reinforce them, had been wiped out. Then, in August, he again reported that 54 soldiers on a vessel had died. Indeed, on May 29, Van Hoogenheim was at his wits' end and begged, 'For God's sake send and help us in our hour of need, and preserve us from the attacks of our armed enemies'. Five months later his predicament had not altered and he despaired

that they were no more than 'sitting ducks' awaiting extermination at the hands of the rebels. Throughout this entire period Kofi engaged in fruitless palaver with the whites.

Disaffection mounting within the rebel ranks, an abortive attempt was made to dislodge the Dutch, who had used the lull to affect necessary repairs to the Fort and reoccupy Dageraad. On April 2 a poorly led group of rebels carried out an ill-conceived attack on St Andries and was routed. On May 13 about 2,000 rebels launched a second attack on St Andries and were beaten off, losing some 50 men as against eight by the Dutch. Since this was the beginning of the long rainy season, a lull in hostilities was not unusual but, even so, Kofi must have been hard-pressed to contain his forces.

After the first setback, fire-fights were tentative and probing as if testing the Dutch to ascertain the real strength of their forces, but there was no further concerted efforts to oust them. It is interesting to note that in July, 42 soldiers, including a surgeon, a sergeant and a Frenchman, Jean Renaud, mutinied, crossed lines and joined the rebels. Testing their loyalty, Kofi caused 20 of them to be executed. The others provided useful intelligence, (which Kofi obviously ignored), repaired artillery, tended the wounded and assisted with the training of the troops.

It can be assumed that the deserters would have revealed the real situation in the Dutch camp, but Kofi, even under intense pressure from Akara and Atta, was not disposed to launch an all-out assault, preferring to persist in protracted and futile dialogue with the Dutch Governor.

As the European forces were strengthened with regular infusions from abroad, the rebel forces were increasingly weakened by dissension and divisions within their ranks. Additionally, the rebel stores had grown dangerously low. There were shortages of all sorts, especially of food, arms and ammunition. The situation was so desperate that, at one point, Kofi actually offered to trade his favourite white concubine for a supply of tobacco, arms and ammunition. Simultaneously, the remaining stores provided yet another area of contention among the various factions of the rebel forces, Kofi preferring to nurse his supplies in splendid inactivity, while his generals opted to utilise the remaining stores to execute a crushing blow on the enemy.

Throughout these several months, for it was August, very little was done to heal the fractures in the rebels' ranks and these expanded until finally Kofi's leadership was challenged by Akara and Atta. Governor Kofi, gradually realising the defectiveness of his strategy and sensing his loss of influence, sometime around October,

in typical Akan fashion, committed suicide, where upon Atta, Accabre, Quacoa, Bauba and Gousari succeeded to the leadership of the rebel forces. Akara was consigned to the work gangs in the fields.

Deprived of the influence of Kofi, it was impossible to keep the rebel forces together. The rebels splintered into several factions under different leaders, each preferring to take the rebellion his separate way. Divided, poorly armed, underfed, starving and emaciated, the rebels faced a rejuvenated European military force, better armed and led than the disparate, frightened and indiscipline rabble they had neglected to defeat. They engaged in frequent skirmishes with decreasing success. Defeat infected their morale and increasingly they recognised the hopelessness of their situation.

In November, Van Hoogenheim launched the final counter-offensive. He organised the encirclement of the rebels by establishing military fronts on the Corentyne, Berbice and Demerara Rivers. This had the desired effect of containing the rebels within a limited and logistically operational area of extermination, affording, as it did the Dutch, easy access to the several rebel flanks which were harried and constantly harassed. The Canje plantations were soon recaptured by Lieutenant Grumble and Van Hoogenheim was then in a position to attempt the recapture of the Berbice plantations. This he began in December. Poorly led, totally disorganised, outgunned and demoralised, the rebels retreated in disarray and were easily taken by the Dutch.

Many surrendered, some turned traitors, some migrated, while others established maroon enclaves from which they waged a bitter but, in the circumstances, futile struggle. Acabre was taken on March 23, 1764 and Atta the following month. Many were killed in battle and others were taken prisoner. Between April and December 1764 a vengeful planter community performed the last barbaric rites with accustomed ferocity. At the height of this phase of the mopping-up operations, the prisoners' roll numbered over 2,000. Subsequently, some 124 were convicted and 56 executed, the last set of 9 on December 15, 1764. Only 16 rebels were manumitted. Among them were Akara and Gousari who, on April 15, 1764, had led the military to Atta's wilderness hide-out. The usually reliable Dutch allies, the Amerindians, received 1,074 guilders for living captives, and, 1,080 for 180 right hands of those that had been killed. The European military forces, having accomplished their task, departed the colony on November 24, 1764.

The rebellion exacted a heavy toll on Berbice. Those plantations that had not been destroyed in the fighting had nevertheless suffered, in some cases irreparable damage, as a consequence of some eighteen months of neglect. The export economy was reduced to shambles.

Just as debilitating for the planting community, the slave force was seriously depleted. The Company plantations had lost 349 of their 1,421 slaves, while the private plantations had lost 1,400 of the 2,800 slaves. 345 or roughly 50 per cent of the European population had either been killed in combat, died of the disease or escaped the colony.

The cost of military reinforcements was estimated at 393,471 and 706,000 guilders. The colony was badly wounded and deeply indebted. It was not surprising therefore that among the remaining whites there were those who preferred abandonment to reconstruction. Van Hoogenheim, before his retirement, (September 10, 1764), due to premature old age, had fixed the cost of rehabilitating the colonial economy at some 4,000,000 guilders. The State of Holland and West Vriestland undertook to advance the colony 50,000 annually for ten years at a 2.5 per cent interest on condition that no dividend was paid to the shareholders of the company for the duration of the loan.

It was obvious that the planters suffered serious losses, but in the final analysis it was the enslaved group which had suffered the most. They failed to take advantage of one of the most propitious moments in history. They had taken territory from the whites, but had consciously foregone the easy option of destroying the white population and establishing the first truly independent Black Republic. In so doing they had allowed the whites to retrieve victory from the veritable edge of defeat.

We can indulge in the various permutations all of which might conceivably explain the defeat of the rebel forces. Professor Craton, for instance, argues that slave uprisings were undoubtedly heroic efforts but heroic failures nevertheless. We would perhaps choose to disagree with him. We would nevertheless still be left with the important task of explaining the failure of the 1763 movement in Berbice.

How crucial was Kofi's decision to engage Governor Hoogenheim in protracted dialogue? Certainly this would explain but one aspect of the dissension within the ranks of the rebels and more critically amongst the leadership. There can be no denying the fact that the failure to contain the damaging effects of this development encouraged and expanded further areas of disaffection and division. More importantly, the choice of that option most definitely allowed the initiative to pass from the rebels to the Dutch. Inasmuch as there were other important factors explaining the defeat, it is difficult to identify one more influential than this grave lapse in the rebels' tactics.

There are those who would give pride of place to ethnic rivalry. They argue that the selection of Kofi and not

Akara as leader of the rebel forces was based solely on the fact that he, even though an African, had lived on the plantation long enough to have become creolised enough and therefore familiar with both the white world of the plantation and the polyethnic world of the enslaved African. Yet Kofi, in common with other leaders, shared an intense dislike for the Company slaves and seemed not averse to the plan to deny them leadership positions in the rebel army and, in an effort to keep the colonial economy functioning, reduced them to a servile status on the plantations.

There is some evidence to support the charge of ethnic preference – the Akans and Angolans being treated with greater esteem than the Congos and Guangos. Such open acts of discrimination angered others and destroyed the limited cohesion of the rebel forces. Ironically, continued success against the enemy might have reduced the full effects of such acts of discrimination, by constantly reemphasising in high and graphic relief the context of the struggle and the true identity of the real enemy. But because Kofi dilated in paper palaver instead of military action, he provided both space and opportunity for the festering of social disorder and the splintering of the rebel forces. In the end therefore, a glorious opportunity was lost to the rebels and the master class regrouped, re-established the old order and kept the oppressive system functioning for another seventy years.

Yet, to the political scientist, no serious act of protest is ever a total failure. What the 1763 movement had in common with similar acts of protests by oppressed peoples everywhere, before and after, was the singular truth that while survival might incur struggle, the central idea and never ending dream was to bring an end to oppression and to be free. The 1763 revolt represented the highest form of revolutionary protest undertaken by the enslaved in Berbice, reflecting a deep and widespread commitment with death the sure price of failure. Atta who endured all the known horrors of European torture recognised that this was the price he must pay for failure. He neither flinched as his flesh was torn from his body by red hot pinchers nor was he surprised by his master's depravity. Violence was an essential ingredient of their relationship. The enslaved utilised violence to achieve his goals as did the slave master to prevent him achieving those objectives.

The Berbice Rebellion proved the slave masters' lie that the enslaved African was meek, docile, passive, 'reduced to the status of children...tranquilised, totally defenceless, ciphers and ants'. The 1763 revolt manifested a magnificent black discontent, provided a profound signpost in the tradition of struggle and riveted attention upon the atrocities of Dutch slavery on the Guiana Coast. Truly slave uprisings like the 1763 movement were fire-bells in the long and dark night of

New World slavery. They were 'cries from the heart; expressions of human need and aspiration in the face of the deepest testing. They manifest that victimisation does not simply produce victims; it also produces heroes'.

Above all, the rebellion sent a very clear message to the metropole, 'to put an end to slave rebellions, you must first put an end to plantation slavery'.



*Dr. James Rose was a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana. He is a Graduate of King's College. He taught History at the University of Guyana. Dr. Rose also served as the Director of Culture.*

# Cheddi and Janet: They Made Tremendous Sacrifices



## **Two dates to remember:**

March 06, 1997 and March 28, 2009. They mark the occasion of the deaths of the late Dr. Cheddi Jagan and his wife, Ms. Janet Jagan.

Every March, we remember them and we relive their lives and reflect on their contributions to Guyana's development with many events and activities in which tens of thousands of Guyanese participate across our 10 Administrative Regions. These include wreath laying ceremonies at Babu Jaan and other venues, lectures on their lives, photo exhibitions and cultural events and unveiling of monuments at varying times and in different Regions.

Dr. Jagan was born in a rural village named Port Mourant, Berbice, in the then British Guiana on March 22, 1918, the son of ordinary indentured sugar workers.

Life was hard. Both parents worked in the Canefield. And while his mother was illiterate and his father had little schooling, they both ensured that their son Cheddi had the benefit of a good education.

Cheddi went on to Queens College. He found life in Georgetown different to the rural areas. He boarded with families.

Cheddi often had to absent himself from school to work in the rice fields and to cut and fetch cane. He also helped his mother maintain a kitchen garden and sell the produce from it. His mother allowed him to retain part of the proceeds for his share of work. Cheddi himself wrote that he learnt managing finance from his mother and leadership from his father.

Graduating from secondary school, Cheddi found it difficult to get a job, but his parents were equally deter-

mined that their son would not be a plantation worker. Cheddi went on to study dentistry in the USA. He worked hard to help support himself: working at varying times/ places as a tailor, salesperson selling patent medicines, dishwasher, delivering evening newspapers, presser in a laundry, an elevator operator, etc.

Cheddi was a diligent student and his hard work earned him a scholarship for his second year at Howard University and in 1938, entry into Northwestern University for a 4-year dental programme. He graduated with a Degree in Dental Surgery in 1942.

In the USA, where he spent 7 years, Cheddi met his wife Janet, a nurse. They got married in August 1943 and the two returned to the then British Guiana in October 1943. Dr. Cheddi Jagan and his wife, Janet Jagan, would change the course of our country's history over the next six decades.

Janet became Cheddi's lifelong friend; a political partner who would remain in her new home Guyana until March 28th, 2009 - the date of her death. She would become our country's first female Head of State in December 1997 following the death of her husband.

Cheddi established his dental practice in Georgetown in 1943. His wife Janet worked with him, and his dental surgery became 'a hive of activities'. Through it, he connected with ordinary people.

Although he liked his profession, he kept looking for something more meaningful. Soon his name became a household word in the sugar belt and, it wasn't long thereafter that Dr. Jagan became attached to the Labour Unions in the sugar belt.

Those were the days when things were happening. World War 11 had just ended and had created difficulties in British Guiana and the rest of the Region. The Labour Party had won the General Elections in England and many were openly talking about Socialism.

In 1946, Cheddi formed the Political Affairs Committee (PAC), which was labour-oriented, while Janet formed the Women's Political and Economic Organisation (WPEO).

In those days, there were no political parties or mass political organisations. Dr Jagan and his wife Janet would later become the founders of Guyana's first mass political movement; and indeed, would remain the leading political figures in the history of Guyana for the next six decades.

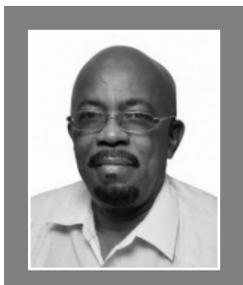
They worked hard and at tremendous sacrifices (insults/ threats to their lives) to liberate the then British Guiana from British Colonial Domination.

Later, they would wage a 28 year struggle for the restoration of freedom and democracy. Victory would come in October 1992, when Dr Cheddi Jagan was elected by a majority of the Guyanese electorate who voted at the General and Regional Elections as Guyana's first democratically elected Head of State.

His wife, Janet stood beside him in all these struggles. Through their tireless efforts, our country did achieve much development in education, healthcare delivery, infrastructure improvement, housing, agriculture, governance, Amerindian land development and governance etc.

Amidst all of this development, Dr. Cheddi Jagan and his wife Janet stood out as international figures in the fight for peace, freedom, progress and prosperity. Recall, inter alia, Dr Jagan's ideas on debt relief, his proposals for a New Global Order which were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 14/11/2002.

To speak of the late Dr Cheddi Jagan and Mrs Jagan is to recall and to reminisce on the lives, the work, the achievements and the contribution of a remarkable man of humble roots and his devoted wife to human development.



*Mr. Norman Whittaker is currently Deputy Chairman of Local Government Commission. He was former Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.*

# Lest we forget: the Cuban Missile 'Scare'

April 1961



The headlines at the time refer to the 'Cuban Missile Crisis'. But how many remember the Cuban Missile Crisis? Or is it the invasion of the 'Bay by pigs'? It all depends on the way we perceive what has become known as the 'Cuban Missile Crisis'. This was the direct result of an attempt to overthrow the legitimate Government led by Comandante Fidel Castro and the Communist Party of Cuba.

It was 1959, the year when Fidel Castro led an uprising known as the May 26th Movement that overthrew the hated Batista Regime. Two years later, the Fidel Castro Government came under attack.

In April 1961, more than a thousand Cuban exiles stormed the beaches at the Bay of Pigs, (Playa Giron), intending to ignite an uprising that would overthrow the legitimate Fidel Castro government or so they thought. Cuba is located only 90 miles from Florida at its closest point to the US.

The American instigated coup of April 17, 1961 soundly defeated by the armed Cuban people who rose up as one challenged the invading force which landed at 'Playa Giron' dubbed the 'Bay of Pigs'. It took the armed Cuban people within 72 hours to defeat the invaders.

Many of those who lost their privileges and possessions during the corrupt Batista reign fled to Florida in search of new freedoms they would have hoped for in the US but reality proved to be much different from expectations. For others like the gangsters, drug dealers and mafia it must have been like heaven.

At one point, the President of the United States, challenged the Cuban Leader to let those who wanted to leave Cuba to give them the opportunity to do so. Cuba opted to build a Socialist Society with the focus being on health care, education and social services for the underprivileged among a host of other things.

The Cuban leader responded favorably, opening up 'the Mariel boatlift'. This is not talked about nowadays and can be easily forgotten by the younger generation, especially those who do not know their history. I distinctly remember reading when US President Carter challenged President Castro to let those trying to escape from Cuba to Florida be allowed to leave freely. Those of us who were active members of the Guyana Cuba Friendship Society were following the events closely.

It was the 15 April to the 31 October that the Cuban refugees boarded the 'Mariel' for the boatlift to the USA. Instead of emptying Cuba as President Carter expected,

the persons leaving included prisoners, prostitutes and many 'undesirables' including social rejects. As you can guess, the boatlift did not last long. President Carter called off the challenge after both leaders mutually agreed to withdraw from the challenge. The US must have been terribly disappointed that the patriotic, skilled and qualified personnel opted to stay and build revolutionary Cuba.

In a 50 year anniversary booklet commemorating the 50 anniversary since Guyana was granted Independence, thousands of booklets were distributed at the Durban Park Square built for this event. Presiding on this historic occasion was President David Granger.

The author raised the question of whether the close relation of Cheddi and Fidel was a matter of fatal attraction for the Guyanese leader, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, a friend of Cuba and the Cuban people. This I consider another of the anticommunist attacks on the PPP and its leader. Cheddi Jagan gave solidarity to the Vietnamese people in their struggle against naked aggression in the same way he stood against Apartheid in the struggle of the ANC and the Communist Party of South Africa against the hated Apartheid system. Even in the face of his own attacks by the anticommunist press he stood firm defending his principles in a principled manner.



*Cheddi meeting with Fidel during the OSPAL Conference in the 60's*

In 1961, after the Bay of Pigs invasion failed, America moved its Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) into Italy and Turkey. It was estimated that these Jupiter (ICBMS) launched from Turkey would only take a few minutes to reach Moscow, the capital city of the USSR. Nikita Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, based on the urging of the Leader of the Cuban people to defend Cuba in the event of an attack by the US and its Allies responded by secretly sending their ICBMs to Cuba by ship to be assembled as a deterrent to any further aggression by the US or its Allies.

A U2 US spy plane, took pictures of the ships taking the missiles to be assembled in Cuba. A huge crisis dubbed the 'Cuban Missile Crisis', enveloped the globe. The threat of a nuclear war hung in the balance as US and Russia, the two leading superpowers faced off at the time. It was a tense moment for all concerned with the future of humanity.

Guyana always stood in solidarity with revolutionary Cuba. When in the 60's the strikes against the Cheddi Jagan Government began it was the Cubans who sent food and supplies to the PPP Government during the strife and strikes in the capital City.

I remember one of our loyal Party trade union activist, and a dock worker, described how he took the wheel of the Cuban ship bringing supplies and guiding it through the docks. Cyril Belgrave, has been a leading and treasured member of the PPP ever since.

A compromise by Khrushchev of the Soviet Union stopped the missiles from being assembled in Cuba in return for the American President removing the Jupiter missiles from Turkey aimed at Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union. Both sides agreed to comply after several hours of tense negotiation.

The entire world breathed a grave sigh of relief. The world was relatively safe again until the US NATO conflict erupted in Ukraine in the first quarter of the 21st century as another attempt to weaken the Russian state, its stated objective.

A year has passed and NATO and the US has refused to compromise even though there is greater danger of a nuclear catastrophe developing. It is incumbent on all peace-loving forces to force the war mongers to the negotiating table to prevent such a war which signals the end of all the gains and sacrifices humanity stands for since Russia sacrificed over 25 million lives to defeat the NAZIS during the Second World War.

Socialist Cuba it must be recognized never failed in lending solidarity to the Guyanese people during the CIA and MI-5 instigated riots and strikes in the city during the 60's after the PPP again won the national elections in 1961. The friendship and solidarity between the Cuban people and the people of Guyana grew by leaps and bounds. For this the people of Guyana will always be grateful for their medical personnel, the training they provided to equip young Guyanese to build their new society; one free from exploitation and oppression.

The Cuban missile crisis, it is said, gave rise to a 'double barrel approach' to both Cuba and Guyana from the Western propaganda standpoint.

It occurred at a time when Marxist and other progressive ideas were spreading throughout the globe like wildfire. Nothing could stop these ideas from reaching to all corners of the globe. And nothing can be further from the truth as it relates to the Guyanese experience.

From the very beginning of the call for Independence both political and economic, by the PPP led by Cheddi Jagan which led to a 'double red' scare. The rigging of elections kept Guyana in a state of inertia as elections were rigged by the main opposition PNC while the West accused others of not having democracy. The propaganda kept accusing the PPP of wanting to be a second Cuba in the Western Hemisphere. This argument is clearly unfounded since when the British sent gunboats to overthrow the PPP Government in 1953 there was no Cuban Revolution. The question arises why these wanton invasions since the 50's.

Guyana a small country with less than a million people, with no standing army, only a small volunteer force, posed a threat to no one, much less the mighty United States. The accusation accompanied by the fear that Guyana will become another Cuba was totally false, unfounded and aimed at Regime change at the time.

It is recorded when Guyana convincingly won its first elections in 1953 there was no Cuban Revolution at the time. It was only several years later Fidel had led the revolution that overthrew the hated Batista dictatorship in 1959.

It was Dr. Jagan who stood on every platform and used every forum including Parliament and the UN condemning all forms of Imperialism, exploitation and oppression. The PPP faced the wrath of those who opposed the PPP stand on Internationalism. Especially since Guyana stood unflinchingly in solidarity with the progressive forces at the time, whether it was the ANC in South Africa in the fight against Apartheid or the Jacobo Arbenz Government in Guatemala overthrown with the help of the CIA in 1954 or the PPP opposition to the Vietnam war and the illegal war of invading Iraq, among several atrocities committed in the name of freedom and democracy.

The only crime committed was that it nationalized the United Fruit Company in the interest of the Guatemalan people. And the invasions continued. Vietnam, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, the Malvinas and even the spice Island in the Caribbean Sea in 1982. In addition, the US, it is said, has over 750 military bases around the globe. Is the US preparing for another war? It is now, the 21st century. The world needs peace more than anything else!

The emergence of the 'BRICS' countries now pose a

direct challenge to US hegemonic ambitions throughout the globe. The acronym 'BRICS' stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Since 'BRICS' emerged more than 34 other states have applied to join the new movement. The 21st century seems to be the century for great promises for the future of humankind as we approach a New Global Democratic Order in the making. This calls for 'a New Way of Thinking' abandoning the old cold war mentality.

Guyana was and is pursuing its own path towards people centered development with an all-inclusive democracy under the umbrella of 'One Guyana'. Every time the PPP won the elections the main opposition Party formed as a break-away faction of the PPP would rig the elections while the West claiming to be the bastion of democracy stood by silently observing the fraud committed against the Guyanese people and their betrayed development stymied by a Party with little or no vision and a lack of clear-cut policies.

The end of the 'cold war' in 1989 has given a new lease of life to development and democracy for Guyana as the PPP again won the mandate in the 2020 elections. The refusal by the Opposition to give up power was defeated by the countries of the West and the European Union lending their international support to the Guyanese people. The role of the US is commendable and indicates the great friendship shared between the people of the US and their Guyanese counterpart. For this act of solidarity we are indeed grateful to a great nation we can work with for meeting our common objectives of peace, democracy and freedom.

Renewing its mandate to govern once again following free and fair elections, March 2nd 2020. The PPP has since set the country on a trajectory that is proving to be virtually unstoppable in spite of the efforts of the forces of reaction bent on stirring up racial strife and animosity based on anti-communism.

Guyana a leading member of the Non-aligned Movement and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) adopted a progressive foreign policy even under the former authoritarian PNC regime which ruled for 28 years based on electoral rigging from 1968, the first rigged elections in full view of the Western democracies.

The Cuban Missile Crisis serves to remind us of the time at the height of the 'cold war' how promises were made and broken by the leading Imperial State powers at the time, the US and Great Britain.

Britain although promising Independence to Guyana under the Party that won the national elections in 1957 only did grant political Independence to the chief rival of the PPP, the PNC which had broken away in 1955 from

the PPP in order to offer their allegiance to the Imperial forces as a means of gaining political power. The split of the revolutionary movement in 1955 had serious implications for a united workers movement which was split along racial and ideological lines thus weakening the national struggle in the interest of foreign domination and exploitation.

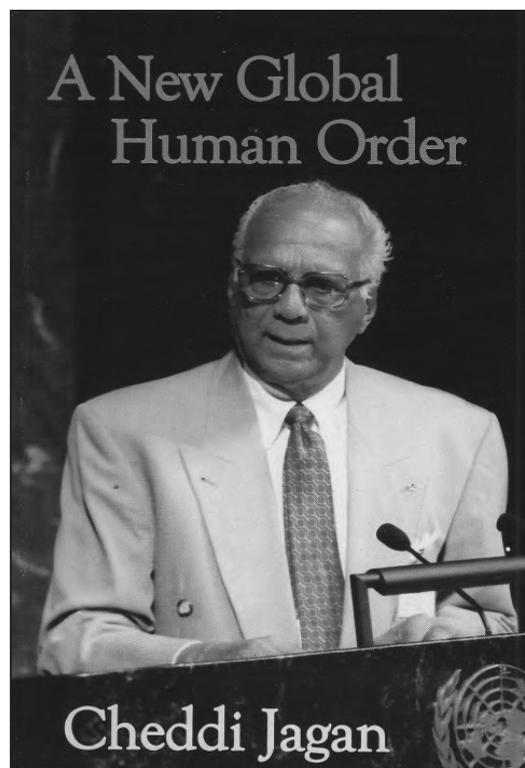
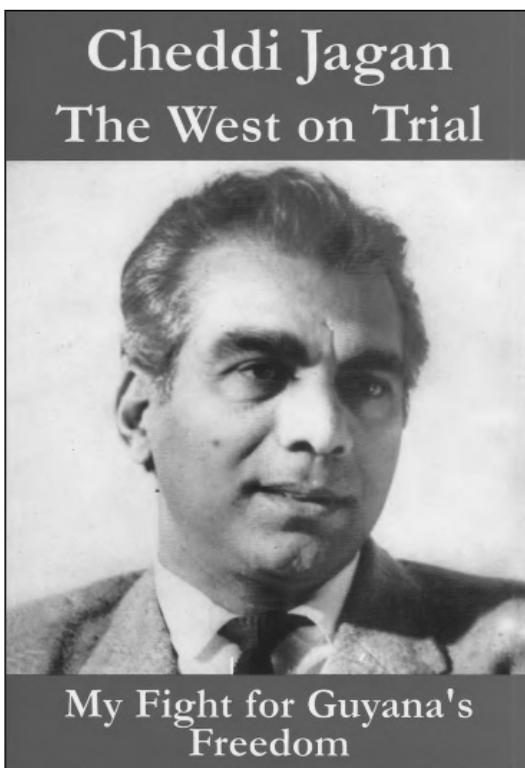
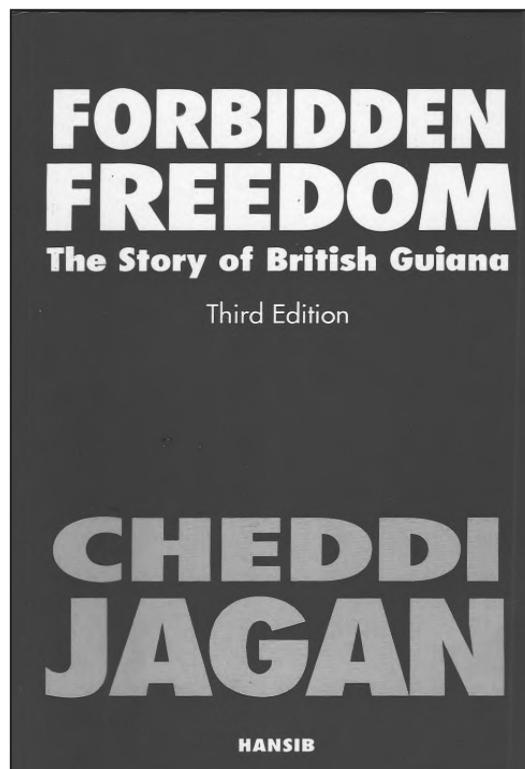
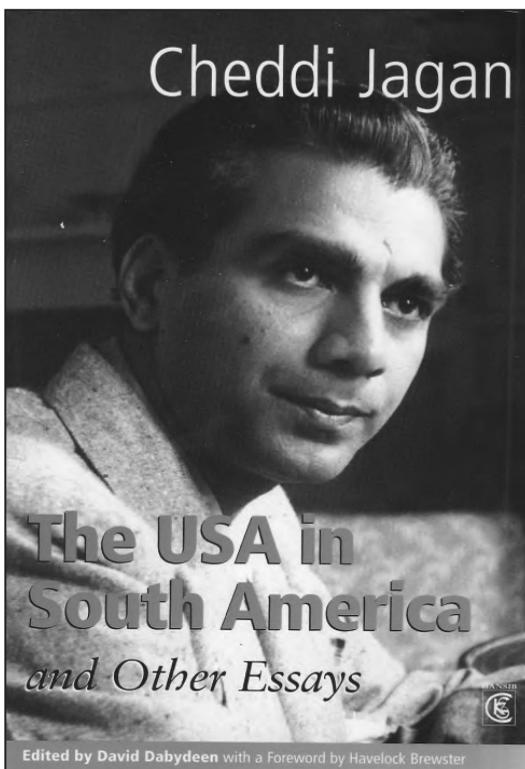
Trade and Economic sanctions placed on Cuba by the US since half a century ago has since become anachronistic and criminal in this day and age. The economic embargo imposed on the Cuban people has so far failed to achieve its stated objective. The Cuban people continue to stand firm in defending the principled gains of the revolution, refusing to bend to US dictate.

The US still faces the dilemma of the large numbers that still flee from poverty, homelessness, unemployment and lack of opportunities in Guatemala, Mexico, Haiti among other nation states. There are those who leave in small boats to enter the US at the risk of their lives, their families and friends in the hope of finding a better life on the other side of the divide, only to find themselves in an Empire of illusions far from the reality they had expected.

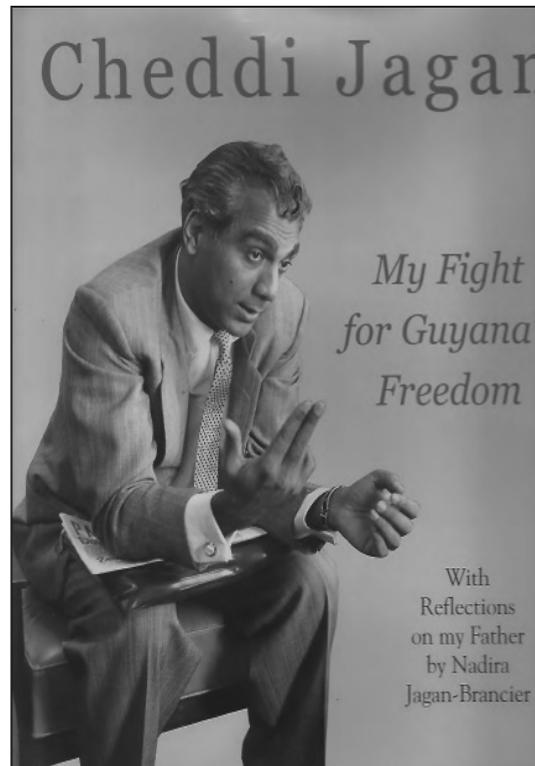
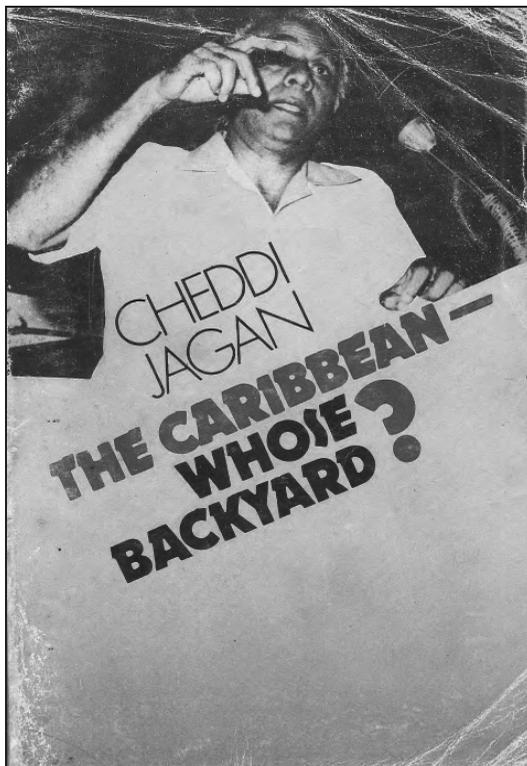
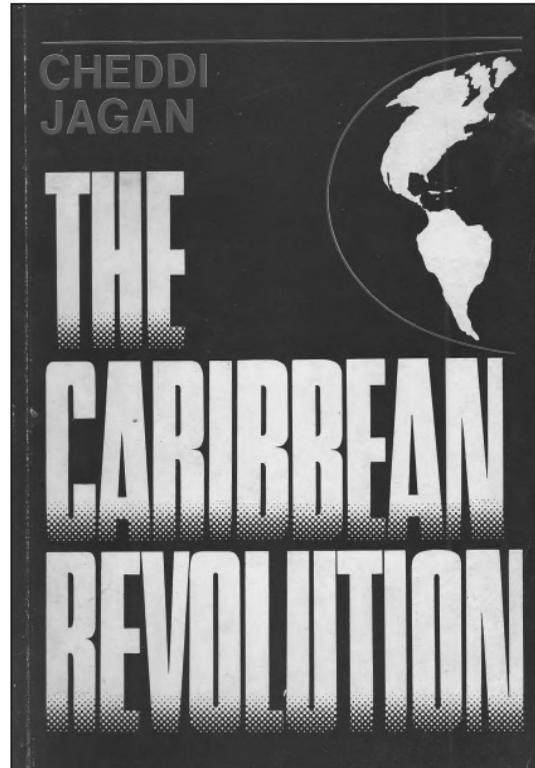
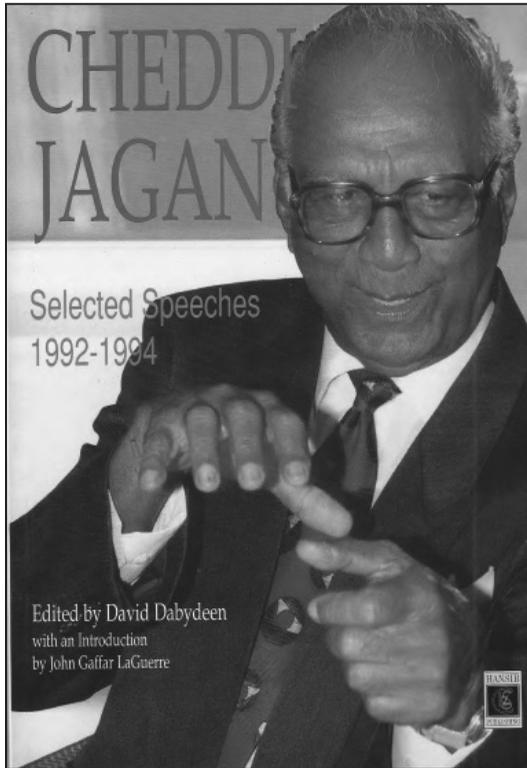


*Mr. Khame Sharma is the former Deputy Director of Government Analyst – Food and Drug Department (GAFDD) Ministry of Health and former Councilor of the Mayor and City Council of Georgetown. He is also the author of two publications.*

# Publications by Dr. Cheddi Jagan



# Publications by Dr. Cheddi Jagan



# Cheddi Jagan Research Centre

The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre (CJRC) was officially opened on March 22, 2000 which was the 82nd birthday anniversary of Dr. Cheddi Jagan. The CJRC is dedicated to making available to Guyana and the world, the very rich collection of materials which captures the visionary thoughts and revolutionary ideas of the late President of Guyana, Dr. Cheddi Jagan (1918-1997)

The centre houses a large archival collection of papers, documents, photographs, audio and DVDs related to Dr. Jagan's long and enduring involvement in leading the political struggle in Guyana and at the global level. Dr. Cheddi Jagan is the Father of the Guyanese nation and a renowned and respected statesman. His immense stature in Guyana the Caribbean and the world at large stems from his ground-breaking contributions in numerous stages of the struggle for a better life for the people of Guyana and the world at large.

These include:

1. The struggle against the British to end colonial rule through political independence.
2. Governing for the benefit of the Guyanese people in the colonial period in 1953 and 1957 to 1964 and as the first democratically elected President of independent Guyana from 1992-1997.
3. The international struggle for an end to poverty and inequality through a New Global Human Order.

The CJRC's aims and objectives are to publish material and promote research on the life, work and ideas of Dr. Jagan which is intertwined with the history of Guyana as a whole from the early 1940's to the late 1990's.

Moreover, the collection is indispensable to any analysis of Guyana's post-war social, economic and political development, since Dr. Jagan's work and thoughts have had such a powerful resonance with his country and beyond.

## Conference Room Rental

The Conference room is available for rental to host meetings, seminars and workshops

### *CONTACT US*

#### **Cheddi Jagan Research Centre (Red House)**

65-67 High Street, Kingston, Georgetown

Tel: (592) 223-7523/4

Website: <http://jagan.org>

Opening hours: Monday – Friday (9:00 am – 4:00pm)

## **Admission – FREE!**

The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre is dedicated to making available to the Guyanese and international communities the Legacy and Work of the Late President of Guyana, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, through research and education.

The Centre is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation located at the Red House.

65-67 High Street, Kingston,  
Georgetown, Guyana, South America  
Tel: 223-7523/24  
Email: [cjrc@guyana.net.gy](mailto:cjrc@guyana.net.gy)  
Website: [www.jagan.org](http://www.jagan.org)

