

PAM 0001

GUYANA'S
1980
ELECTIONS

FRAUD
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A Synopsis of Rigged Elections in Guyana

Guyana, the English-speaking Co-operative Republic on the South American mainland with a population of 830,000 inhabitants, has had seven general elections so far under adult suffrage, four of which were held while the country was still a colony under British imperialist control.

The elections in 1953, 1957, 1961 and 1964 were won by the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which secured a majority of votes. The first three contests were held under the system of constituencies or first-past-the-post, while the fourth was by proportional representation (PR).

The PR system was devised by the imperialists, and instituted for the very first time in the then British Guyana in 1964, in order to remove the PPP from office and instal a docile puppet regime. The plan succeeded, for although the PPP polled the single largest number of votes — 45.8 per cent — and actually increased its electoral showings over the 1961 count, the People's National Congress (PNC) led by "moderate" Forbes Burnham whom the imperialists felt would give them less "trouble", with 40 per cent of the votes, was given sanction by the colonial office to lead a coalition government with the right-wing pro-imperialist United Force (UF) which polled 12 per cent.

With the minority PNC at the helm of government, nothing was left to chance; so that in post-independent Guyana the rigging of elections has become so far the most serious violation of human rights in the country. There has been instituted under the PNC an elaborate system of fraud, resulting in three rigged general elections in 1968, 1973 and 1980; rigged local government elections in 1970 and a suspension for a decade of fresh local government elections; a rigged referendum in 1978; a two-year postponement of national elections; and a rigged Constitution.

Through fabricated, padded voters lists; extensive abuse of proxy, postal and overseas voting; disenfranchisement of genuine electors; recycling of voters; the seizure and tampering of ballot boxes by the military; etc., the PNC "increased" its electoral support from 40% in 1964 to 56% in 1968, to 71% in 1973, and 77% in 1980.

The massive electoral fraud had been exposed by the independent Granada Television Company (UK) in their three documentary films, two in 1968 — "The Trail of the Vanishing Voters" and "The Making of a Prime Minister" and one in 1973 emphasising that the PNC "did it again!"

The transcript of the second film stated that **"a hanged man voted in the Guyana General Elections. So did children."** The Research Officer declared: **"It is my inescapable conclusion that the elections inside Guyana were neither free nor fair."**

Humphrey Taylor, who conducted an independent survey of overseas voters in England in the same film, observed: **"Obviously, I don't know what happened in Guyana, but so far as Britain is concerned, the compilation of the register was a totally dishonest and corrupt operation. And, as we have clearly established, the great majority of people listed do not exist. This, I would think, is unprecedented for a Commonwealth country, as far as I know; and it's, you know, a pretty awful and disgraceful episode."**

The registration of voters for the 1968 elections when the electoral roll increased by 20.9% over the 1964 roll, was carried out by Shoup Registration International, the CIA front company which conveniently disappeared after the elections, when investigations were mounted. Shoup had done bogus registrations before in South Vietnam to help imperialist puppets "win" elections there.

Inside Guyana, the PNC's electoral fraud was thoroughly exposed. Randolph Cheeks, a former Minister in the PNC-UF Coalition Government in 1964-68, made this pronouncement: **"Fraud is a mild word to describe the motions which Guyana went through on December 16, 1968... The scandal of the overseas vote, the prodigious**

list of electors at home who will never be found but who voted by proxy, the host of **bona fide** voters who were denied ballot papers on the grounds that they had already voted, the insertion of spurious ballot papers into the ballot boxes, the denial of ballot papers to overseas voters known to be opponents of the ruling party, the placing of party activists in control of every aspect of registration and election.....these are only party of the irregularities imposed on this country in what is wrongly called an election... **Down the corridors of the centuries, this day will be remembered with shame."**

As in 1968, there was extensive padding of the voters' lists at home and overseas for the 1973 elections, to the extent that despite a population growth rate of only 2.5%, the electoral roll increased by 24.5% between 1968 and 1973.

Not satisfied with its crooked simple majority in the 53 member Parliament, the PNC announced its intention to grab a two-thirds majority at the 1973 elections. So new features in electoral dishonesty and outright PNC vagabondage emerged that year.

Among those features was the introduction of postal voting, which was intended to expand the area of proxy fraud. The vast numbers of non-existent persons, the unborn, the dead, and disenfranchised, 'cast' ballots by post. Several thousands of genuine voters who went to the polls on voting day discovered that others unknown had already cast ballots in their names through postal and proxy voting !

The PNC regime further made last minute Orders designating new counting centres — all in Georgetown and in close proximity to the headquarters of the armed forces. Prior to 1968 a preliminary count of ballots was allowed at each polling division and the final count in each of the electoral districts, which stood at 35 for the 1964 elections. This practice was discontinued after the PNC assumed office. For the 1968 elections the PNC regime designated only one counting centre in each of the three counties, Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo. This

was to facilitate the tampering with the ballot boxes which were transported over long distances, and accompanied by highly partisan soldiers, policemen and PNC activists. In 1968 the tampering was so clumsily done during the long journey to the counting centre that in one ballot box four parcels of ballot papers, all marked for the PNC, bound with rubber bands, were found !

In 1973 tampering with the ballot boxes was more blatant, as the armed forces actually seized the boxes by force from the various polling places and spirited them away to the army headquarters in Georgetown before taking them to the three counting centres in Georgetown. Trigger-happy troops killed two PPP supporters and wounded a number of others on the Corentyne while the ballot boxes were being hijacked.

The entire conduct of the 1973 elections and the army's role in it, have been documented by Janet Jagan in her book : "Army Intervention in the 1973 Elections in Guyana". Ms. Jagan who was then representing the PPP on the Elections Commission, resigned from that body which had relinquished to the PNC its constitutional powers over the electoral process.

The 1980 presidential, general and regional elections which were run off simultaneously, promised more of the same types of irregularities, fraud and the take-over of the ballot boxes by the military to help return the PNC to office for the third consecutive time in sixteen years.

The Socio-Economic Crisis at Election Time

To think that a government in office for 16 years, in which the people suffered tremendously, could "win" by a "landslide" defies the intellect, and credits the frustrated electorate with no intelligence. The electorate in any part of the world would repudiate such a failure as a government in any election—were they free and fair. That was the case in Guyana.

While the electorate indeed rebuffed the PNC regime by an overwhelming majority, the army saved the day. It seized the ballot boxes by force, and enabled them to be tampered with, thereby returning the discredited corrupt PNC to power with a manufactured "77 per cent majority" which few people take seriously.

The national economy of Guyana has been sadly mismanaged since 1965 when PNC economic policies began to be implemented under Anglo-American dictat. For election year 1980 the situation was observed to be as follows:

Unemployment raging at 30 per cent; inflation galloping at 20 per cent per annum; skyrocketing cost of living; reduced subsidisation on essential goods and services; electricity costs up by 100 per cent; transportation costs up by 43%; consumption tax up by 8 per cent ad-valorem; total increased taxes, etc., imposed by the Budget exceeded 1979 by \$81 million.

Wage increases were a minimum of 5 per cent. Taking into consideration 20 per cent inflation, real wages fell by 15 per cent in 1980. Taking into consideration the similar 20 per cent inflation in 1979, when a total wage freeze was imposed nation-wide, real wages fell in that year by 20 per cent compared to 1978 when a government-TUC wage pact gave the workers in the public sector \$11 per day, on the understanding that it would rise to \$14 per day in 1979. Between 1979-80 therefore real wages plunged downwards by 35 per cent. In other words the workers' dollar lost 35 cents from its value in two

years.

Over the past 3 years (1978-80) 4,000 workers got the sack under the guise of "redeployment". More are being retrenched in 1981. The refusal of the regime to pay the public sector workers \$14 per day in 1979 robbed them of \$85 million in wages.

If \$14 per day was agreed upon in 1979, then taking inflation into account, the workers should have received \$16.80 per day in 1980. Instead, they were fobbed off with a mere \$11.55 per day minimum. In a mere half-year (January-June 1980) the urban cost of living shot up by 14.3% according to statistics from the Ministry of Economic Development's Statistical Bureau. At this rate it must have averaged 28.6% by year end. Therefore to give workers only 5% minimum was wicked politics. For it to have been done in "election" year showed the supreme contempt of the regime towards the downtrodden oppressed exploited working class.

Farmers were also being fobbed off with : slashed bonuses, high cost inputs, shortages of insecticides, weedicides and fertilisers; poor or no maintenance of access roads aback or drainage and irrigation facilities; uneconomic "guaranteed" prices for crops and herds; exorbitant rates for farm loans, etc.

The general dissatisfaction in the three major industries of the economy, led to year-end figures showing an all-round 20% shortfall in targets. Bauxite failed by 400,000 tons; sugar failed by over 66,000 tons; and rice failed by 40,000 tons. Taking into consideration that the 1980 Budget envisaged revenue at \$477m and that this figure was based on the targets presumably being achieved, it is a foregone conclusion that revenue fell sharply as a consequence of the targets not being achieved, therefore the presumed deficit of \$200m climbed in 1980 to \$278 million.

The regime had projected expenditures totalling \$1,012.6m, with revenues being \$477 million, leaving a primary deficit of \$535.6 million, partly financed by loans, credits, and grants amounting to \$335.6 million. Up to the time of the Budget being tabled in Parliament, the estimates showed that only \$328.9m were rounded up leav-

ing the deficit at \$200 million, which according to World Bank opinion and Guyanese experience, was covered by the printing of paper money.

Production, productivity and revenue have been plummeting in real terms since the PNC took power in December 1964. This downward trend has accelerated in the last few years. Not wanting the bankrupt regime to collapse, US imperialism (buttressed by the IMF and the World Bank, plus other off-shore lending agencies in the imperialist camp) has been pouring aid into the country. The austerity measures of the IMF have been hitting the people savagely.

The 1980 debt payments alone gobbled up \$299.5 million. This is equal to 65.5% of actual revenues collected (\$457m). It is of interest to note that debt payments plus the oil bill amount to \$659.5 million, which is \$202.5 million more than state revenues. More evidence of bankruptcy.

The 25 state corporations are habitual money-losers, some (the trading arm) only making profits because of huge mark-ups on goods they handle. State Corporations monopolise important internal and external trade at the distribution, wholesale and retail levels, and are in a position to rip-off the consumers with impunity, by fixing arbitrary prices, tariffs and rates. This was the case in 1980.

The housing situation is atrocious. Having failed miserably in its "feed, clothe and house the nation by 1976" scheme, the regime has apparently down-graded its housing projects. That 1972-76 scheme on which millions were spent, was supposed to produce 65,000 housing units. Instead it produced only 7,000 units most of which were built by private persons. It flopped by 89.2 per cent.

Where the education system is concerned, it is churning out youths in a sorry shape — functional dunces — many of whom can barely read and write or comprehend in correct perspective. The situation in 1980 was much worse than in 1974 when the Education Minister pronounced that "three quarters of the children coming out

of school could not read or write properly..."

The so-called free education slogan is a farce. Parents are paying through their noses to maintain their children in schools. Commuting, text books, uniforms, lunches, etc., take the lion's share of these expenses. A plethora of raffles and fairs have to be patronised, and numerous donations and contributions also have to be made to help maintain the finances of the school system.

The students emerge however experts in marching, rallying, and making crowds for PNC speakers, having been coerced and whipped into that shape by PNC authorities in various schools.

Malnutrition between 1971-78 for children up to 5 years of age, increased by 20%. In 1980 only 5% of the Budget was allocated to health, but the security forces which seized the ballot boxes were given 10.1%.

Where coastal commuting is concerned, the regime since 1974 arbitrarily scrapped the vital and popular railway, and resorted to fleets of diesel buses, and fleets of other fuel consuming passenger and freight vehicles, bringing the fuel import bill to a colossal \$360 million in 1980. Considering that 1980 revenues netted \$457 million, the fuel bill amounted to 78.7% of it, which reveals a shocking lack of foresight in planning.

The construction of the Tiger Hill hydro-electricity project which would have cost only \$32 million had it been undertaken years ago when recommended by Freece, Cardew and Ryder (consultants) has not been commenced as yet, precipitating disastrous load-shedding and power cuts, as the decrepit thermal power generation system breaks down often.

While the regime complains bitterly about man-days lost to production through strikes, it is mute to many more times man-days lost through unemployment, power failures, and inadequate public transport facilities. Frequent blackouts have thrown thousands of workers out of work, cut wages and piece rates, cut management profits, and cut state revenue as a consequence.

Election years was also a peak year for crimes of all

types—murders, robberies, arson, embezzlement, fraud, bribery, shoplifting, armed hold-ups, and barefaced violent rapes. Theft of motor vehicles and parts shifted into high gear for 1980, with a record number of stolen bicycles (the poor man's transportation) exceeding 457 machines. There was also a peak in violence, culminating in the brutal political murder of Dr. Walter Rodney on June 13, 1980 by security agents manipulated by the PNC.

The assassination of Dr. Rodney benefitted the PNC and imperialism, and dealt a stunning blow to the revolutionary process in Guyana. For 1980, fear stalked the land.

Fed up with the situation, thousands of Guyanese voted with their feet in 1980—long before December 15. They fled across the border to Brazil. Those who fled to Brazil consisted mainly of Amerindians who occupy the frontier areas of Guyana and the hinterland, and are treated like third rate citizens by the regime. Guyanese have also fled over the years (1965 - 1980) to Venezuela and Suriname, two more bordering states. Large numbers have emigrated to the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom. A handful of them are in the West Indian islands.

This high rate of exodus has been having a deleterious impact on the population growth rate. Official statistics (exposed by the World Bank Mission 1980) showed that the population growth rate fell from 1.7% in 1975 to 1.3% in 1979 and is still trending downwards. It was once 2.5% per annum! Would those who fled social conditions under the brutal regime, **VOTE FOR THE PNC IN THE OVERSEAS VOTERS' LIST?** Most certainly **NOT!**

Seeking to find excuses for its economic failures, the PNC blames the weather and the workers, "saboteurs" etc., besides lashing out at civil servants, technocrats, managers, and administrators. Those who deviate or try to show independent initiative are hatcheted, demoted or booted out of their jobs.

The perfidious PNC doctrine of "Paramountcy of the PNC" is wreaking havoc with individual creativity, administrative initiative, and democratic solutions to burning socio-economic questions.

Bribery, brainwashing and news censorship played an important role in helping to dupe the disgruntled masses. The Ministry of Information (internal PNC propaganda arm) which cost some \$250,000 in 1964 swallowed up over \$5 million in 1980. The Foreign Ministry (external PNC propaganda arm) which in 1970 got \$3 million, gobbled up \$17.5 million in 1980. The security forces which cost \$15 million in 1970, cost \$103 million in 1980. These are not figures which attest to a popular government.

Elsewhere, extravagance and corruption are hallmarks of PNC rule. Irregularities exist in the guise of the Ministry of National Development Office of the PNC General Secretary, a hybrid which exists nowhere else in the world. That outfit got from the national treasury \$54.3 million in 5 years (1975-80) and has only accounted for \$1 million in salaries and wages. This is a shocking demonstration of insensitivity in an area of sensitive public concern. No account has so far been made to Parliament as to where and on what were \$53.3 million of the tax-payers' money spent. The MND is a national disgrace, and a scandal of unprecedented proportions.

The two development plans of the regime (1966-72 and 1972-76) flopped ignominiously, achieving nothing worthwhile jobs-wise or development-wise. The current 1978-81 Plan is in shambles.

The following facts are some more concrete reasons why the masses would hardly have voted the incompetent PNC back to power in 1980: They deal with cost of living statistics as pertaining to the family budget of all Guyanese.

A basket of 24 essential consumer items which cost the consumer \$8.87 in 1964 (the last year of the PPP government) cost \$40.60 in 1979... the year of the wage freeze. The figures mean that basic prices rose $3\frac{1}{2}$ times, while the basic wage rose by only $1\frac{3}{4}$ times from \$4 to \$11.00 per day.

For 1980, a total of 16 price-controlled consumer

items rose by \$7.77 but the regime merely gave public sector workers a minimum 55 cents more per day. Three of the 16 items alone ate up 54 cents out of the 55 cents — transportation fares, flour, and chowmein price hikes.

Further evidence of bankruptcy and inflation could have been seen in 1980 in the following information revealed by the Bank of Guyana Annual Report 1979. The statistics revealed the heavy reliance of the regime on printing paper money to meet expenses.

- Currency notes which were \$108.1 million in 1976 rose to \$153.1 million in 1979...having peaked at \$161.4 million in 1978, the year when \$11 per day was paid, an increase from \$8.40 per day. Production did not increase or keep pace with these heavy resorts to the printing presses.

- Between 1976 - 79 (4 crisis years of zero growth and economic regression) the money supply rose by 41.6% but Gross National Product only rose by 13.5% prices-wise. Money therefore rose 3 times as fast as production of goods and services!

With 3 times as much money chasing scarce goods and services, is it any wonder that inflation bounds along at double digit figures, sending the cost of living skyrocketing upwards and depreciating the consumers' dollar? It should be noted also that zero growth would have been registered in 1980 also, commensurate with the 20% drop in production in the 3 strategic sectors of the ailing national economy.

Election Year — 1980 — under the PNC was in short replete with the usual hallmarks of oppression and misrule — hardly the credentials with which a party in government, seeking re-election, would successfully face the disgruntled electorate.

The masses had a credible alternative in the form of a broad-based PPP-led government which in its energetic campaign promised to pay the working people a realistic minimum wage, weed out corruption and embezzlement, prune the top-heavy bureaucracy and cut out extravagance, increase allocations for social services and restore subsidies, pay farmers reasonable and guaranteed prices for their produce, sever links with the IMF, renegotiate and re-schedule debt payments, and get the country going under a democratic people's revolutionary government.

Popular Demands for Free and Fair Elections

The People's Progressive Party and other opposition groupings as well as independent social groups and organisations singly and collectively waged a consistent campaign for free and fair elections in Guyana. But the PNC minority regime remained insensitive to popular demands for electoral reforms, and with each elections, through a combination of fraud and force, negativised the will of the Guyanese people.

The PPP tabled several motions in Parliament calling for a new registration of voters; an end to overseas voting; an end to postal voting; an end to the wholesale abuse of proxy voting; the counting of ballots at polling places; the reconstitution of the Elections Commission; the confinement of the army to barracks during elections, etc. Years passed, but not a single elections motion has been placed on the Order Paper for parliamentary debate. The PNC regime simply ignored the opposition motions.

The campaign for a return to the democratic functioning of the electoral process gained momentum over the 12-year period since 1968 with broader sections of the Guyanese society subscribing to and agitating for, the free and fair elections demands. ♦

Prior to the 1968 elections a massive "Free Vote" demonstration led by PPP Leader Dr. Cheddi Jagan on the Corentyne was dispersed by armed troops. And just before the 1973 elections PPP functionary David Westmaas dramatised the call for a free vote by staging a one-man march from Crabwood Creek to Georgetown — a distance of some 120 miles!

Over the years scores of picketing exercises were carried out throughout the country, outside the homes and business places of PNC proxy collectors, as proxy voting has been one of the major areas of fraud in elections under the PNC. Proxies increased from about 300

in 1961 to 6,635 in 1964 to over 30,000 in 1968. No figures were given for the 1973 and the 1980 elections.

Opposition forces even took the battle for free and fair elections to the High Court of Judicature. The deliberate non-publication of the list of proxies and the bogus registration of electors, over which the Elections Commission had no control, were among the issues raised in the Courts, but as in Parliament, justice in the Courts eluded the Guyanese electorate.

Just as the fight for fair and free elections was waged inside and outside the Parliament, inside and outside the Courts, inside and outside the Trades Union Congress, so too it was waged inside and outside Guyana. The broad-based Civil Liberties Action Council (CLAC) submitted an elaborate Memorandum to the United Nations charging that the ruling PNC has violated the right of citizens to indicate their choice of government by voting at elections, as contained in Article 21 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The PPP petitioned the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organisation of American States, the Caribbean Community Secretariat and lobbied governments, political parties and all bodies concerned with human rights in the hope that pressures would be brought to bear on the PNC regime to respect the right of the Guyanese people to vote in periodic free and fair elections.

On January 3, 1980 a 21-page memorandum on Political and Civil Rights and Free and Fair Elections in Guyana was jointly issued by the People's Progressive Party, the Working People's Alliance and the Vanguard for Liberation and Democracy grouping.

The basic demands for electoral reforms were repeated on August 22, 1980 in a joint three-party statement, as follows :—

(1) Elections Commission:

- (a) We demand the re-constitution of the Elections Commission with the Chairman being a person of regional or international standing, not normally resident in Guyana, and who would be in fact and in law Chief Executive Officer of the Commission;

- (b) We demand that the reconstituted Elections Commission be made **directly** responsible at all stages for the processes of the recompilation of electoral lists with sufficient time allowed for revision and claims, and the actual conduct of the elections, up to and including the declaration of results;
- (c) We demand that power to appoint and dismiss all official persons connected with the compilation of the Elections List and all Returning Officers, Presiding Officers and their assistants, be vested in its entirety in this Commission;
- (d) We demand that all limitations, "constitutional", administrative, political or otherwise, on the powers of the Courts to enquire into the working of the Elections Commission be abolished.

(2) Conduct of Elections:

We demand:

- (a) That the National Registration Act and the Representation of the People (Adaptation and Modification of Laws) Act be immediately repealed insofar as they unconstitutionally diminish the power, authority and independence of the Elections Commission.
- (b) That overseas voting, except for those Guyanese who are normally resident in Guyana, but who are temporarily away, e.g. diplomatic staff and persons on holiday or on scholarships, be immediately abolished.
- (c) That proxy voting be strictly limited to the physically incapacitated and to persons engaged on election day duties which require them to be away from their electoral districts.
- (d) That all forms of postal voting be abolished.
- (e) That the following procedures for the counting of votes be adhered to:
 - (i) Preliminary counting must be done at each polling district immediately after polling ceases;

- (ii) a document attesting to the results must be signed, by a representative of each party;
- (iii) agents of opposition parties must be allowed to accompany the ballot boxes at all times, including their opening and the final counting by the Returning Officer which should be done by him in each electoral district; and all transportation of ballot boxes from one electoral district to another for the purpose of counting votes must be outlawed.

(3) Electioneering Conditions:

We demand equal access by all political parties to the state-controlled media. In particular, we demand that equal radio time be allotted to the political parties for party political broadcasts. We also demand that all administrative and other illegal restraints on the holding of public meetings, on the freedom of assembly generally, and on publishing by opposition political parties be immediately removed, and that parties involved in campaigning be given full access to all interior areas.

None of these demands was met.

The Electoral Lists — Facts and Fiction

We need to ask the question not only why things happened as they did, on December 15, 1980 but how: we must take a closer look at the electoral roll and the massive removal of names of bonafide voters and at what happened in the past; we must seek to reinforce the external (overseas) evidence from earlier exercises (Granada films, physical spot-checks and interviews) with internal documentary evidence of the way the PNC side-stepped

or broke the law; and also show how difficult if not impossible of fulfillment were some administrative commitments because the PNC made them so.

The decision to disenfranchise opponents of the regime, mainly PPP supporters, was the PNC's panic response to the strong support the PPP had been receiving, particularly in the rural areas, interacting with the frighteningly low attendances and general public apathy at PNC meetings, particularly in Georgetown. Compounding this panic, and inextricably mixed up in it, was the PNC's paranoid reaction to the presence in Guyana of the International Team of Observers.

The fact is the entire election exercise, from the publication of the first Notices and Orders and the first oral announcements, were, and have always been, a colossal legal fiction, as "empty" as the Guyana treasury.

THE 1968 ELECTIONS

The electoral "currency" had been debased ever since the publication 12 years ago of the first "overseas" lists of voters. Well over 68,000 had been registered in that first election exercise, more than half being entirely fictitious and most of the remainder highly suspect. It was and still is quite impossible for there to be any impartial supervision of or control over their compilation. Nor was there any supervision or control of the local lists either, and they were also heavily padded with names of dead people and fictitious names.

The "legal fiction" of the election exercises then and thereafter stems from the manipulation by the PNC of the electoral lists compiled in the first half of 1968, with the ruling party ignoring the laws and regulations it had made for the registration of these young, up-and-coming overseas determinants of our destiny. What took place during that period was not a registration, but simply a compilation of 21-year-old non-resident "Guyanese" whose intervention in Guyana's affairs was only nominally covered by the National Registration Act, which is "AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL REGISTER, FOR THE ISSUE OF IDENTIFICA-

TION CARDS, AND FOR PURPOSES CONNECTED THEREWITH."

Thus this compilation, of doubtful parentage, clandestinely made as many as 68,588 adult non-resident "Guyanese" available for manipulation by the PNC in Guyana's elections. They were culled, corralled or conned into becoming eligible from 55 countries, but according to the official "Report on the National Assembly General Election 1968" only 36,745 (53.6 per cent) "voted", 34,429 for the PNC.

The PPP remains committed to abolition of overseas voting of this nature, so that the Party's interest in the 1968 deception arises from —

- (a) the fact that this spurious overseas "vote" alone represented 6 parliamentary seats, and
- (b) dire forebodings of what the future held for Guyana with the PNC in absolute control of the electoral machinery.

THE 1973 ELECTIONS

In 1973 the PNC made an Order for the registration of 14 year-old (and above) non-resident Guyanese, as well as another Order for resident Guyanese. Both Orders were made on 6 March, 1973, with the registration for residents to take place from 15 to 21 March, and the non-residents from 15 March to 30 April. On 6 March also, PPP Member of Parliament Derek Jagan tabled a Motion calling for the voting age to be reduced to 18 years. What happened next has been fully described in a PPP Booklet "Rigged Elections in Guyana."

The Motion was never debated. The PNC, by various devices, which included taking full advantage of the hopelessly inadequate time for registration, a total of 18 hours, contrived to arrange that, especially in areas of PPP strength, as few PPP supporters as possible were able to get registered. A PPP Press Statement on 24 March, 1973, put it this way —

"....It would seem that the exercise has been carried out so as to permit mainly PNC youths to be registered. After this was accomplished and a prepon-

derance of the PNC youths clearly established, the government will most likely reduce the voting age to 18. It will then put on the pose of being progressive. . . ."

This, indeed, was exactly what happened. Two months later, in the National Assembly, the PNC tabled legislation for reducing the voting age (and the age of maturity) from 21 to 18. This move was defeated when the PNC failed to get the necessary two-thirds majority in Parliament to amend the Constitution.

Before pursuing further the consequences of the failure of the Bill, reference must be made to statements by the Prime Minister, Mr. Forbes Burnham on the radio on 26 May, 1973. After announcing the date of the 1973 elections (July 16) he said that 18 year-olds would be voting for the first time and that there would be postal voting. Proxy voting would be restricted and, instead of three, a proxy holder could only cast two proxies. During the broadcast he said that as early as 31 October (1972) he had referred "to attempts that were being made to include in the lists the names of persons not entitled to be registered and the fact that they were so devised as to conceal the identity of the persons or interests on whose behalf these registrations were secured. I assured the public that the arrangements for overseas voting would provide safeguards against irregularities of this kind. Again on November 12, I indicated to the public that the checking of the lists by the Chief Elections Officer had indicated that to the already heavy burden of the initial registration of an essentially migrant community residing in a foreign environment were added the special problems of deliberate attempts on the part of unscrupulous persons to secure improper registration. . . . On March 6 of this year the Minister of Home Affairs made a statement in the National Assembly from which it was clear that the 1968 overseas register was being scrapped and that an entirely new register was being prepared under arrangements which would ensure, particularly in the light of past experience, the avoidance of irregularities from the very beginning. It is from this new register that the lists of overseas voters will now be produced."

But as in 1968 the entire registration process, local and overseas, for the infamous 1973 elections was under the complete and strict control of the ruling party, which alone appointed all the officials including the registration officers, who were paid according to the number of names they registered.

As events proved, the "safeguards" (whatever these were), he spoke about were just as ineffective in 1973, 1978 and 1980.

Anticipating the passage of the legislation lowering the voting age, the PNC carried out the registration exercise and later made preliminary lists of eligible voters 18 years old and above. In other words, 18 year-old persons were included on the lists although the Bill had not yet even been presented in Parliament. This fact was underlined by an incident in Trinidad which was reported in the press. Soon after the date of the election had been announced a number of Guyanese teenagers resident in that island were sent their ballot papers by post from the office of Guyana's resident representative. This premature move was described as a "mistake" by the Chief Elections Officer!

It is charitable to assume that statements made in the National Assembly by PNC Ministers when the Bill for reducing the voting age to 18 had been tabled, revealed a case of "the right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing," and nothing else.

As stated above, the PNC had "jumped the gun" by including 18 year-olds on the preliminary lists. That was why the Guyana representative in Trinidad (and no doubt elsewhere overseas) could distribute ballot papers to teenagers whose names were on the lists soon after the election date had been announced. And that was why in Guyana large numbers of obviously under-age voters (under 21, that is) were allowed to vote late on July 16, 1973. There had been an official attempt to delete "illegal" voters by crossing out their names, but it had been very incomplete.

In short, arrangements for the 1973 elections were a thoroughly botched-up operation.

THE 1980 GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS

Although nobody could have known it at the time (except the PNC) the first hint of the subsequent massive deletions and additions to the preliminary lists was given in a **GUYANA CHRONICLE** news item of Wednesday, November 5 under the headline **COMMISSIONER CORRECTING VOTERS' LIST**. The news item made a number of 'points' — that the Commissioner of National Registration has the power of his own accord to correct any errors or irregularities in the voters' list; that the Commissioner was taking very seriously his duty to ensure the accuracy of the Electoral roll and had been checking the preliminary lists very carefully; as a result he has already begun to exercise his powers of correction and would continue to do so vigorously and methodically; then came the cryptic statement that 'the spokesman confirmed that divisional registrars have been deluged with claims for inclusion in the lists and also with objections to names on the lists'.

It is necessary to note the dates very carefully. The above statements were made just nine days after the lists had been posted up (only in a few places, and certainly not on 2 buildings in every Division as the law required) and just 11 days after the Minister of Home Affairs had made the Order directing the Commissioner of Registration to prepare a preliminary list of Electors who were 18 on 30 September, 1980. That preliminary list contained 512,500 names of persons said to be eligible as electors.

Now, early in December as many as 111,500 names had been removed from the lists, including 11,000 from Region 1 — Barima-Waini, where an incredible 20,000 persons had been included on the preliminary list. Situated in North-western Guyana, Barima-Waini was one of those inaccessible regions that the PNC were later to complain of as creating a lot of problems in collecting the ballot boxes after polling ceased. This was said to be the reason for the long delays in the ballot boxes arriving at the counting places!

Using this one example (Barima-Waini) it is difficult to see how, as government had assured, "every Guyanese 18 years and over could check the list in relation to his

residential area" in order, if necessary to make a claim. Are we to believe that from this widely-dispersed and very inaccessible populace 10,000 objections were received by the Commissioner and duly dealt with according to the Regulations? After polling ceased, did not the authorities take two days to bring in ballot boxes from areas even closer to headquarters? Were these among the objections the Commissioner was alleged examining as early as 5th November, 1980, for errors or irregularities? But why, in the first place, had he not ensured that the lists were reasonably accurate before releasing them for posting up on buildings in far-off Barima-Waini (or Matthews Ridge or Jonestown, for that matter?). The announcement made shortly before polling day that 111,500 names had been deleted implied that that number of objections had been submitted and disposed of according to the Regulations: otherwise, the removal of the names was whimsical or capricious. It is certain that the massive deletion of names could under no stretch of imagination have been accomplished within the given period of time.

Having regard to the need by opposition parties to nominate their candidates from lists of verified electors, the refusal to let opposition parties have copies of the revised lists (i.e., with the thousands of deletions) only served to confirm the belief that a colossal fraud was in the making!

Last but by no means least, the **OFFICIAL GAZETTE** containing the directions about the lists were, as noted by the International Team of Observers, as scarce as snow in Trinidad. No one could be found who had seen the last directions until within a week or two of polling day, 15 December. The view is current that they were back-dated.

The difficulties of a similar nature in regard to the Overseas lists are so enormous, and so impossible of achievement, that the least said the better. To submit a claim or objection, the voter resident overseas had to appoint a proxy in Guyana to act for him/her and thereafter to deal on his/her behalf with the Deputy Commissioner of Registration. But there were apparently no deletions or additions to the overseas lists. The PNC was cocksure that nothing needed to be done to clinch the overseas fraud. It took 34,748 out of the 35,748 votes allegedly cast!

The Methods of Rigging

By and large, the People's National Congress, in the December 15, 1980 elections, repeated, with some streamlining, the fraud it perpetrated in the July 16, 1973 elections.

However, the PNC entered the 1980 elections with the clear intentions of not repeating its major blunder of 1973, that is, the use of the army to take the ballot boxes over and into the Army Headquarters at Camp Ayangana. That was too blatant, so for 1980 the PNC prepared the ground for avoiding overt use of the Army.

Aside from all the various methods of rigging, which will be outlined below, the PNC counted on three factors to successfully carry out its electoral exercise without resorting to the use of the army. One was the colossal disenfranchisement of 111,500 voters from the preliminary lists. Second was the use of high-powered American-type campaigning, replete with handsome handouts of PNC caps, shirts, pencils, balloons, bags and massive use of posters to bring out its supporters from its "strongholds". Third was the factor of the boycott call by the WPA and the VLD which was expected to adversely affect the People's Progressive Party, the only Party in Guyana that could draw a majority of votes.

It must be recalled that the PNC in the 1973 elections, although it had prepared military "contingency" plan, only put it into operation when it became clear that the PPP would win in spite of the various forms of rigging; so strong was the turn-out of PPP voters as against the poor turn-out in PNC areas. For these elections in 1980, therefore, the PNC was counting on a much lowered PPP turn-out, believing that there would be a positive response to the boycott call in rural (PPP) areas: in Georgetown, Linden, etc., however, it believed that its own supporters would turn out in strength. It also counted heavily on the monstrous disenfranchisement of 111,500 voters, the majority of whom were opposed to the ruling party. In fact, that was the

reason for the removal of their names from the lists.

Again, on voting day 1980, the PNC found that it had miscalculated, and so once again, the army was called in to perform the final rites of the electoral fraud. This was necessary in view of the massive turn-out of PPP supporters and the corresponding exceptionally low turnout of PNC voters. The stunning fact was that if the ballot boxes were not tampered with and if the votes cast were counted as deposited by the voters, the PNC would have been out of office. Thus, for the second time in seven years, the ruling party had to resort to the use of the army to take over the ballot boxes. It was for this reason that PPP General Secretary Cheddi Jagan described the December 15, 1980 elections as a "virtual army coup".

The first aspect of the rigging began with the preliminary lists. The opposition parties contesting the elections could not obtain the lists until November 7, much too late to carry out the house-to-house survey to determine if valid names were on the lists, or the more tedious task of searching for the names of dead persons, non-existent names and of those who had left Guyana. (The lists were also needed for the compilation of the PPP's lists of candidates, since these had to be eligible electors).

Apart from the requirements of the law, official promises that the lists would be posted in public places for perusal by residents were never fulfilled. Checks in many places including the most prominent ones like the Georgetown City Hall, proved that lists were not being exposed for public examination. In some places, Bartica for example, officials went through the procedure of posting up voters' lists, which were photographed and then taken down!

There were just not enough time for objections to be made, challenging false names on the preliminary lists or for claims to be made by persons whose names were not listed among the 512,500. Even if this had been possible for the opposition parties, of what use would it have been when, later, the election officials, practically all members or supporters of the PNC, arbitrarily deleted 111,500 names and added 29,375 to the lists, and copies of these revised lists were not given to the opposition parties?

Lord Avebury, leader of the International Team of Observers, no doubt with the procedure for dealing with claims and objections in mind, put it pithily when he wrote about the 1980 elections: "It would have been physically impossible to update the election lists by deleting 111,500 names and adding 29,375 names in the two weeks between 'publication' of the preliminary lists on October 28 and the closing date for objections on November 10. But the major opposition party received only one copy of the preliminary list on November 7 giving them three days to check 512,500 names! The Acting Chairman of the Elections Commission said 'they have not done their homework'."

That there was a deliberate padding of the lists, mainly with fake names and, contrarywise, the deliberate dropping of names in certain areas, is indisputable. The padding of lists was, as in the 1973 elections, more discernable in interior areas which could not be properly monitored or investigated. In one area of the Mazaruni, where only a small camp exists, the voters' lists showed numerous residents, including some 70 women, in an unpopulated area. Even names of the Jonestown dead cropped up as voters. A very weak denial of this appeared well inside an edition of the **Chronicle** close to polling day. It was evident that the denial was done only in an attempt to save face, but not meant to be taken seriously.

After the startling announcement of the removal of 111,500 names from the list, the opposition parties contesting the elections were never given the list of deletions. When protests about this were made, the election officials claimed that these lists were posted up. When checks on this were made, and the PPP member of the Elections Commission reported that the lists in fact, were not up, the lists eventually were stuck up in some public places. But this was done only after the arrival of the International Team of Observers, shortly before the date of elections.

Since the other contesting party, the United Force, fielded very few polling agents, the only party that really monitored the polling stations, the PPP (aside from the

ruling party which, in any event ran the elections with its own members and supporters, selected by top PNC personnel) had no access up to voting day to the final list of persons who could vote.

Thus, the list of voters, the basis of any elections, were completely rigged, fraudulent and unacceptable in any fair elections.

The other aspects of rigging only added to the disgraceful manipulation of the polls, so that the minority PNC could claim a victory. These included the phoney postal, proxy and overseas votes. The ruling party, again as in 1973, following so much exposure in the 1968 elections, down played the proxy vote. Despite this, it was still misused by diehard PNC members, who forced many government employees to sign over their right to vote. Again, no information as to the number of proxy votes was given. Nor were there any means of examining and checking on the applications for proxy voting.

The overseas vote, was undoubtedly blatantly rigged. In this respect, the ruling party apparently threw all caution to the winds and used its overseas high commissions and embassies to crudely rig the votes. A sample survey done in Canada revealed that of 2,000 names investigated out of an electoral roll of 8,000, only 16 were actually eligible to vote, or existed !

Guyanese living abroad were denied access to overseas voters lists and those appointed as polling agents of the PPP were rejected with vehemence. No one was to witness the skulduggery going on in the overseas offices. And, as was easily predicted, the PNC 'won' 98% of the overseas votes, from Guyanese who in the main, had run away from poverty, oppression and discrimination of the PNC regime !

The crudest form of rigging was evident in the postal vote, which as in 1973 was used mainly to syphon off the names of non-existent voters — the easiest way to handle the fake names on the lists. The list of postal voters, in both elections, was kept a dark secret, being impossible to examine. And, of course, the so-called application

forms, with forged signatures would never be exposed to examination. Apparently, thousands of genuine voters, too, were shifted over to the postal balloting, without their knowledge, and obviously by means of forged signatures. This came out clearly when, in 1973 and 1980, thousands of disgruntled voters were told at the polling stations that they had already voted — by the postal vote. Not one of these persons had ever placed a signature on an application for postal voting!

The so-called public display of the casting of the postal ballots was another farce. The Elections Commission was invited to witness the posting of the postal ballots, an operation meant to confuse and prevent any possible checking of the validity of the names. The PPP member on the Elections Commission caused considerable embarrassment when she returned to this operation unexpectedly, to find the farce had stopped once the visitors had left. The show had stopped when she, the only outsider, had left the premises.

It was on polling day, December 15, 1980, that the most vicious aspects of the electoral rigging took place. Many polling stations were in the homes of well-known PNC activists. Many polling stations and polling divisions were supervised and manned by well-known PNC activists. In fact, the whole electoral personnel were PNC, from the tightly guarded Registration Office, right through every aspect of registration and elections.

The first shocks of the day took place when voters turned out from early morning in exceedingly large numbers to vote in traditional PPP strongholds; in contrast, in the urban areas, particularly Georgetown, Linden and New Amsterdam, traditional PNC strongholds in the 1960's, the polls were dead. The immediate reactions were clear and expected from the PNC-run electoral machinery. In the PPP areas of greatest support, the slowest action ensued. Every possible method of refusing voting rights to voters in long lines took place — from hassles over spelling of names, demands for ID cards (not required by law) and announcements that the persons' names were not listed, or that they had already voted,

or that their names had been dropped from the lists, etc. For those who could not be prevented from voting, the go-slow was applied, so that the lines were long in the hot burning sun, for hours and hours, lasting to the late hours of the night (the law permits persons in line at the time of close of poll at 6 p.m. to remain in line and vote. The massive lines of determined PPP voters kept some polling stations open until 10.30 p.m.).

There were many other tricks up the PNC sleeves. A number of polling agents were refused entry to polling stations. They were told that their papers were not in order, that they had received no information of the appointments, and so on. Many PPP polling agents were not admitted to the polling stations in time to witness the examination of the ballot boxes. One of the two PPP agents assigned to Orealla and Siparuta in the Corntyne River, R.N. Persaud, was detained by police while boarding his launch to travel to his appointed place. His associate could not go alone, and so Orealla and Siparuta were without agents. The PNC deliberately made it impossible, in other instances, for PPP agents to be present in a number of Amerindian areas.

In the areas where the PNC expected support, it was not forthcoming, and so the 'recycling' of votes, as in the 1978 Referendum, began. Since the genuine voters would not turn up, fed up as they were and are with the PNC regime, the PNC tried to muster what it could to do the rounds; that is, getting people to cast their votes. Despite repeated protests from non-PNC polling agents, the officers in charge allowed all and sundry to vote, even when the names they used were not to be found on the lists.

The PPP has in its possession the taped confession of one person, employed by the government, who was sent out seven times to vote in the city of Georgetown, each time under a different name and each time, using chemicals to wipe off the indelible ink used to mark the finger of those who had already voted.

But even this recycling could not build up any sizeable numbers at the polls, which were visibly empty in the capital city, to be seen by all observers, representa-

tives of embassies, journalists, etc. The PNC was quite clearly taken off guard and was not fully prepared for the low polling by its "supporters". It could not muster the numbers needed to embellish the actual low poll. It must have been during this period, too, that the regime started to put into operation its contingency plans, now necessary, to use the military to take over the ballot boxes. As further events proved, the PNC was not really prepared for this operation.

If the PNC was fully prepared for the army take over of the ballot boxes and for all the necessary arrangements to change the ballots, the whole operation should have been carried out with some means of efficiency. But once again, the PNC bungled its operation of changing ballots by taking very long periods, so long that even those most sympathetic to the PNC could not doubt that the ballot boxes were being interfered with. The iniquitous operation of ballot switching was further exposed by the drastic methods used to keep legitimate counting agents and representatives of the PPP from entering counting stations, or even getting anywhere near.

Thus, the military and the architects of the electoral rigging, by their own behaviour, made it clear what was going on inside the counting stations and their need to cover-up the dirty operations. As Lord Eric Avebury noted in his report on the elections: "Military personnel refused accredited representatives of opposition parties access to the count — at gunpoint in some cases".

On the evening of December 12th, there was a sudden announcement of an alteration of the places of count, the most significant being those for the interior areas. For example, for the North West District, with its headquarters at Mabaruma, the regime designated Matthews Ridge as the counting place. This unexpected announcement made it impossible for the PPP, the only Party other than the PNC putting polling agents in that region, to send representatives there. One reason was security, since Matthews Ridge is an isolated area, fully occupied by PNC diehards and with a long, desolate, and possibly dangerous river voyage of some 60 miles from Mabaruma: dangerous for anyone who might challenge

the authenticity of the ballots, dangerous in that a person, or a boat with persons, could easily be waylaid in the journey to or from Matthews Ridge.

Besides, the Party could not send its counting agents to any of the four interior counting places since all commercial flights were filled by the time the public announcement was made that the counting places had been altered. The party representative who went to Guyana Airways to book seats was told that the PNC had already booked all the seats on the plane for Bartica — one of the 4 interior counting places, while the others were already booked up.

The time factor is another that bears examination. Take the Georgetown-Mahaica region, for example. The furthest point that any ballot box had to be moved to reach the North Ruimveldt Multilateral School where the counting was to take place was St. Cuthbert's Mission in the Mahaica River. That area can be reached by travel overland from Timehri and should not take more than four hours. Yet counting for this region did not begin until approximately 24 hours after the close of poll. Also, the harsh methods used to prevent legitimate and official representatives of the PPP (since by this time the United Force had given up) gave the lie to the reasons for this put forward later — that is, that counting could not begin until all ballot boxes had arrived.

In any free and fair election, the parties contesting have the right to observe the ballot boxes from time of closure to time of opening, even if there is a delay for one reason or another. If ballot boxes are hidden from the representatives of contesting parties for long periods, there are obviously clear opportunities for interference. Those responsible for elections should have nothing to hide and thus no reason to keep legitimate representatives away from the ballot boxes, even when necessary to wait for boxes to arrive. But in the case of the December 15th elections, they could not allow opposition eyes to view the ballot boxes, since they were in the process of being broached. The ballots were at the time being switched.

The time factor, the long periods when there were no election results announced, took away the last possible ounce of credibility that the PNC might have been able to muster. When the regime finally announced to the foreign press that the count would begin at the North Ruimveldt Multilateral School, and all were invited to witness it, not one journalist evinced any interest. The show was already over! The rigging, as far as observers, foreign press, diplomats and the contesting parties were concerned, was already completed. The official counting was just a waste of time !

Army Terror and Repression

In the 1973 elections, the Army was used to seize the ballot boxes which were taken to Camp Ayangana and kept there for various periods, some into days, during which time the ballots were interfered with. When the ballot boxes finally reached the counting centres (all very close to Army Headquarters) there was visible evidence that the ballots were not those cast by the voters. Ballots in boxes did not match numbers recorded at various polling stations; keys to boxes and sealed documents were all mixed up. The operation was so crude that in more than one instance, ballots were found in boxes, bundled together with rubber bands.

In the December 15, 1980 elections, the army again played a prominent role in rigging the elections. Their operations, along with the police, can be examined in four stages::

1. prior to elections, in intimidating voters;
2. the seizure of ballot boxes;
3. preventing of surveillance of ballot boxes; and
4. blocking counting agents from entering the counting stations.

The army terror began some months before the general elections were publicly announced. The most notable instance of intimidation and terror by the GDF took place in August in Leguan Island. Some 75 members of the GDF in full battle gear were landed by army helicopters on the Island and immediately went into action to terrorise the residents, mainly small farmers, moving around with guns on-the-ready. Leguan is a known stronghold of the PPP, which, in all previous elections gave the Party full support.

Five premises were thoroughly ransacked and one person was severely beaten, resulting in a fractured hand. This operation followed an earlier manoeuvre on the Essequibo Coast and country-wide mock military operations throughout the coastal belt.

Also, prior to elections, army and police personnel were active in searches, not only of houses of mainly PPP activists, but of vehicles and cyclists on the roads. Numerous road blocks were seen in various parts of the country during this period.

On one occasion, in late October, three overseas journalists were arrested, searched and detained at the Vreed-en-Hoop police station. They were Michael Goddard of Barbados Rediffusion, Russel Pierre of Westindian World (a London publication) and Juliet Alexander of the BBC (Black Londoner programme).

Another act of intimidation was seen during the October 6, 1980 enthronement of Mr. Burnham to the non-elected post of "President." At the ceremonies which took place at the Public Buildings, snipers were seen on top of buildings, the first time ever in Guyana.

However, the major acts of intimidation took place in the month before elections, when, throughout the country there were major concentrations of military personnel. In Berbice, a company strength of soldiers, armed to the teeth and in full battle dress, staged counter-insurrectionary manoeuvres and marches through the villages. Searches of homes of PPP activists and road blocks with searches were constant reminders of the army-police pre-

sence. Soldiers in Berbice were stationed at New Amsterdam, Albion, Whim and Skeldon. They demonstrated visible evidence of their strength with anti-aircraft guns, and armoured vehicles with machine guns mounted.

The same process was repeated in other parts of the country. West Demerara was fully militarised with soldiers taking over state buildings in Parika and Leonora. The head of the International Team of Observers, Lord Eric Avebury, noted that "The Guyana Defence Force occupied police stations, conducted military manoeuvres, stopped and harassed pedestrians and motorists during the last days of the campaign." He also noted that the military presence was "intimidating."

There were many ugly incidents of police-army terror. The homes of 8 PPP activists at Black Bush Polder, Corentyne, were searched, the men were roughed up and hauled to the Mibicuri Police Station. Two of the men reported that they were subjected to torture, when efforts were made to force them to "confess". A policeman with a shot gun ordered one of the men, Rajkumar Mootoo, to strip naked. Then a string was tied to his testicles and pulled. A gun was then put to his ear; he was slapped, cuffed and beaten and was later grabbed by the hair, with his head banged against the wall. He was forced to drink dirty water and vomited. His cell was flooded with water and he had to lie on the wet floor. Medical reports substantiate the charges of torture made by the PPP activists.

On December 2, 1980, 23 activists of the PPP were arrested following a public meeting held at Alexander Village, which the PNC attempted to disrupt. The activists, returning to Party Headquarters with the public address system, were stopped by police, dragged out of the vehicle and beaten mercilessly by a combination of police and PNC thugs, who were present. They were then taken to Brickdam Police Station and placed on charges. Later, when PNC thugs brought the Party vehicle to the police station, the public address system was missing.

Medical treatment had to be given to those beaten, one of whom suffered a fractured arm. Bail was refused and they were held in jail until after the elections, when bail was finally allowed, at the sum of \$2,000 each. The

refusal of bail was reminiscent of a similar occurrence in the 1973 elections when over 50 PPP activists of Enmore were held in custody and refused bail until after the elections, when all charges were dropped!

The second stage of army-police intimidation and terror took place on the day of elections, when, everywhere in Guyana, the ballot boxes were seized by the military and/or police. The examples are too numerous to recount. In Berbice troops swooped down on Port Mourant-Tain, surrounded the polling places and made off with the ballot boxes in armoured vehicles equipped with machine guns. At Grove Government School, East Bank Demerara, troops invaded the compound, menaced the sea of voters with machine guns, ordered the polling stations to be closed, thereby depriving voters standing in line the right to cast their ballots. They left with the seized ballot boxes. At Windsor Forest, West Coast Demerara, the army arrived in full battle dress, cordoned off the four polling stations, menaced the people with armoured vehicles on which machine guns were mounted, and later drove off with the ballot boxes. The troops were equipped with gas masks on their faces. Before seizing the ballot boxes, they ejected the PPP polling agents, preventing them from placing their seals on the ballot boxes. And in the Essequibo Islands, in Leguan, 5 jeeps and one truck-load of troops removed the ballot boxes after surrounding the several polling places. And so, on and on, are the examples of the military manoeuvres to seize the ballot boxes on behalf of the PNC regime.

And, as a foregone conclusion, no representatives of the opposition parties were permitted to follow the ballot boxes. In fact, after this point, ballot boxes were not seen by those appointed to either witness the voting as polling agents, or to witness the counting of ballots as counting agents. The army was now in full control. The virtual "army coup" had at this stage taken place.

Equally ruthless were the methods used to prevent officially appointed representatives of the PPP from keeping their eyes on the ballot boxes at the places of count.

At the Anna Regina Multilateral School, where the ballot boxes for Essequibo were taken for "counting", a

roadblock manned by soldiers of the Guyana Defence Force prevented Isahack Basir, Pariag Sukhai and Ali Baksh (candidates and duly appointed counting agents) from entering the place of count. They were ordered to 'disperse' and threatened that if the soldiers had to disperse them, "it would be a very sad incident." At no time were they ever allowed to enter the Anna Regina Multilateral School.

In Georgetown, at the South Ruimveldt Multilateral School, where the boxes for Regions 3 and 4 were brought, a joint military-police operation prevented the PPP representatives, including the PPP member on the Elections Commission, from entering the compound. Despite presentation of official passes, they were refused entry. When they protested, nearby soldiers, armed with weapons closed in menacingly. The occupants of a car accompanying these PPP representatives were held, searched, stripped naked and the upholstery of the vehicle was ripped and vandalised by the police.

Lord Avebury, referring to these happenings said: "The forcible expulsion of the opposition agents from all the places where ballot boxes were held, and the long delay in announcing the count, undermine the credibility of the counting process."

In the Caribbean, journalists described these violations as "farcical, horrific and fraudulent".

That voters came out in massive numbers in spite of the military-police intimidation, and struggled to the bitter end to expose the electoral rigging, is evidence of the strength of character and courage, and resilience of Guyanese, who refused to be cowed. They refused to be intimidated!

The Role of the Mass Media in the Elections

The two radio stations, referred to as Channels One and Two of the Guyana Broadcasting Corporation, are state-owned. So too is the country's only daily newspaper, **Chronicle**, which in 1973 was merged with the **Guyana Graphic** under an umbrella printing house called the Guyana National Newspapers Limited.

The two press media outside government control are the **Mirror** newspaper and the **Catholic Standard** publication, both being published on a weekly basis. The **Mirror** which published opposition views, and more particularly those of the PPP, after functioning for seventeen years as an independent daily, was forced to come out as a weekend 4-page mini-publication due to a decision of the PNC regime to cut off its newsprint supplies. (The case of the **Mirror** has been documented by journalist Moses Nagamootoo in the booklet, "The State of the Free Press in Guyana").

Since the rigged 1973 elections, when the military seized the ballot boxes after polling to help return the PNC in office with a two-thirds majority of parliamentary seats, "state-ownership" and "government-control" became synonymous with PNC-ownership and PNC-control of the media. The PNC's doctrine of "party paramountcy" was invoked to make this warped arrangement appear acceptable.

In the hands of the PNC manipulators, the mass media became an instrument for making party propaganda and peddled half-truths and lies, the kind of which appeared in a pre-1973 election edition of the PNC's official organ, **New Nation** when a whole-page photograph was printed with the caption: "**A PPP Mass Meeting — This is what it looks like. And this is the rigging that haunts Dr. J.**" The photo, taken out three years before, was not a mass meeting, but a meeting of representatives of various organisations called for solidarity with the February Revolt in Trinidad. But for the PNC it was necessary to resort to that type of propaganda con-trick to show that the PPP was losing support, and was disin-

tegrating, in order to establish a *a priori* justification to the 1973 election rigging.

A similar pattern of propaganda manipulation and journalistic juggling was evident during the 1980 elections campaign. In the instant case, however, the PNC commandeered exclusively the use of the various arms of the state propaganda media.

Lord Eric Avebury, Chairman of the U.K. Parliamentary Human Rights Group and of the International Team of Observers at the December elections, commented that the attempt to manipulate public opinion by the PNC was both "massive and blatant."

Said he: "There is only one daily newspaper, the *Chronicle*, which read like an election broadsheet for the PNC.

"The government-controlled radio relentlessly churned out the PNC party line, ignoring all facts unfavourable to the PNC or its agents, distorting or inventing stories with a view to discrediting opponents of the regime.

"The non-state press was being slowly killed off from long before the election by the squeezing of its newsprint jugular. Only the state-controlled press gets any newsprint at all."

Lord Avebury spoke about the "Niagara of literature" and posters distributed by the PNC regime and concluded that the right of association and freedom of expression were repeatedly violated during the elections campaign.

This picturesquely-put "Niagara of literature" was probably funded by the notorious Ministry of National Development which gets an annual block-vote of \$8 million for "PNC Development", as the PPP Parliamentary Opposition repeatedly charged. This Ministry, whose premises were burnt down in July 1979 and have since been re-sited in the Sophia military complex, is integrated with the PNC Secretariat and the Office of the PNC General Secretary.

Chief Information Officer in the Ministry of Information Alan Fenty in ecstatic delight during his radio

"Viewpoint", the full text appearing in the December 4 **Chronicle**, commented thus: "To be honest, the poster war — or contest if you like— seems to be one-sided.... it's the PNC posters that pre-dominate. You see them here, you see them there, you see them everywhere. Some are plastered any old how on any surface in sight — from people's newly painted walls to traffic signs..for sheer volume, variety and numbers, you can't miss the PNC posters."

Party hacks, House of Israel thugs, some of the diplomatic personnel summoned home for the elections, military, para-military and police members, they all got into the PNC propaganda act. "They seem to have many brave and bold souls among them," Fenty observed.

School buildings, dwelling houses, premises of foreign Missions, stores, lamp posts, cars, buses, etc., were painted with PNC slogans and plastered with posters, and in at least two instances Church buildings were defaced. One "brave" and "bold" soul, over-zealous about his job, daubed black the face of a watchman who objected to slogans being painted on the glass show-case of a mid-town store. Another "soul" obviously dropped a D when he painted in big bold letters: "FOR WAR WITH PNC".

The Ministry of Information from where many PNC die-hards operate, churned out party propaganda in its daily releases and features. All that was being done at taxpayers' expense, as the Ministry had palmed off over \$5 million from the state budget for 1980. The mis-information was funnelled into the **Chronicle** and aired over the radio stations, and sent overseas by party zealots who acted as stringers to various foreign media.

The following are samples of the kind of party sycophancy which the Ministry exhibited during the elections campaign:—

November 11, item 6: "PNC 7th., District Conference"; item 7: "Youths Condemn Vile Acts" and concluded "We are all assured of a secure future under the PNC"; item 8: "Youth Have An Obligation to the PNC".

November 27, item 2: "Amerindians Reaffirm Sup-

claimed; "PPP Unfit to Rule"; "What Does the Future Holds For Cheddi Jagan?" etc., etc..

Then came the propaganda con-trick. A photograph with Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham shaking hands was printed with the bold caption: "Burnham is the Best Friend Jagan Ever Had". That picture was taken out four years before, after the PPP had announced critical support for the government at the height of destabilisation efforts from imperialist-satellite states. Another misleading back-page story was captioned: "Jagan backs Burnham", when in fact a wealthy businessman whose name is K.S. Jagan had declared support for the PNC.

The state-owned radio stations played an equally servile role to the PNC, giving live coverage to PNC public meetings, party conventions and highlighting PNC propaganda, on every news-cast. Calypsoes about the PNC were played intermittently, and a PNC jingle was carried after every peak news-cast.

The doctrine of party paramountcy was firmly stamped on the state-owned media during the 1980 election campaign, and it continues to be so stamped — the only difference is that the stamp is becoming brighter and clearer with the lines being blurred between state news and PNC news.

Observer Team Confirms Rigging

An independent Team of International Observers drawn from the United States and Commonwealth member states concluded that the 1980 elections were clumsily managed and blatantly fraudulent. The Team was headed by British Peer Lord Eric Avebury who was an official observer at the 1978 Bolivian elections.

The Observer Team has released a 50-page Report, entitled "SOMETHING TO REMEMBER" — a title suggested by a calypso sung at the campaign platform of the ruling party.

The elections, the Observers concluded, were sadly something to remember — as an example of the way the determination to cling to power at all costs can poison the springs of democracy.

The main conclusions of the Observers were as follows :—

1. There was a relatively high turnout of voters in opposition areas, and a low turnout in former strongholds of the ruling party.
2. Considerable evidence was collected of voters in many instances being intimidated and physically prevented from voting for opposition parties.
3. The staff of the whole polling process appeared to be supporters of the PNC.
4. Large numbers of eligible voters were denied their right to vote.
5. Abuses were primarily directed against supporters of the opposition parties.
6. Evidence was supplied of double registration of voters.
7. Ballot boxes arrived late at many stations.
8. There were many polling stations adjacent to, or very near, PNC offices. Some polling stations were in the private residences of PNC activists and can-

didates. Some were in police stations, one at least with an armed guard on a locked gate.

9. The military presence in some areas was intimidating. The boxes were collected by military personnel who prevented accredited officials of the opposition, sometimes by force or the threat of force, from accompanying or following boxes. Military personnel refused accredited representatives of opposition parties access to the count at gunpoint in some cases.
10. The forcible expulsion of the opposition's agents from all the places where ballot boxes were held, and the delay of at least fifteen hours in the announcing of first returns of the count undermines the credibility of this process.

.. The International Observers gave fourteen separate examples of how the elections were manipulated and rigged :—

- i Deletion of names from the electoral lists.
- ii Abuse of proxy voting.
- iii Abuse of postal voting.
- iv People were told that they were dead.
- v PNC agents outside the polls gave people slips of paper bearing wrong ID numbers, or told them their names were not on the list, although they were.
- vi Voters were disenfranchised because of minor technical or clerical errors in the list.
- vii Fraudulent votes had already been cast in the voters' name.
- viii The hours of polling were arbitrarily extended.
- ix The processing of votes was deliberately stalled.
- x Polling agents were not allowed to inspect ballot boxes before polling started.
- xi Incapacitated voters were not always helped and were sometimes instructed to vote for the PNC.
- xii Persons who had not voted claimed that they had their fingers inked forcibly by PNC agents. Conversely, PNC supporters whose fingers were inked were allowed to vote and some PNC supporters did not have their fingers inked after voting.
- xiii Some Presiding Officers had written voters' numbers on the ballot papers, making it easy to know beforehand how the voters actually voted.

- xiv Unlisted PNC supporters were allowed to vote, but in PPP areas Returning Officers invariably refused to exercise their discretion in favour of unlisted persons voting.

The Observers stated that they came to Guyana aware of the serious doubts expressed about the conduct of previous elections, but determined to judge the December 1980 elections on their own merit and hoping that they should be able to say that the result was fair.

They deeply regret that, on the contrary, they were obliged to conclude, on the basis of abundant and clear evidence, that the election was rigged massively and flagrantly. Far from legitimising the PNC's assumption of office, the December events confirm all the fears of Guyanese and foreign observers about the state of democracy in Guyana. The Guyana elections, they concluded, were rigged in every possible way.

The Members of the International Team of Observers were :—

LORD ERIC AVEBURY Chairman, U.K., Parliamentary Human Rights Group. Served as official Observer at Bolivian elections in 1978.

LORD PRATAP CHITNIS Member of UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group. Served as official observer at Interim Election in Zimbabwe in 1979 and Zimbabwe Elections 1980. Leader of Delegation to El Salvador in 1978.

MR. DENNIS DALY Practising Lawyer. Chairman of the Jamaican Council for Human Rights.

MS. PETA - ANN BAKER Administrator, Jamaican Council for Human Rights.

MS. HEATHER JOHNSTON President, Canadian Council of Churches. Member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

REV. CARL MAJOR Member, National & World Pro-

gramme of Anglican Church in Canada. Member, Task Force on Racism, Canadian Council of Churches.

DR. RAMESH DEOSARAN Professor of Sociology, University of the West Indies. Sponsored by the Caribbean Conference of Churches.

REV. WILLIAM NEWELL Gregorian University, Rome. Vatican Observer to the OAS, Representative of Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA).

MS. FRANCIS HOLLIS Lawyer, United States of America. Sponsored by WOLA.

MR. LENNOX HINDS Representative to the United Nations, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, USA.

MR. MEL KING Member of the Massachusetts State Legislature.

These Observers saw enough with their own eyes and heard with their own ears so many well substantiated allegations of fraud and violations of the democratic process that they concluded unanimously that the worst fears of the Guyanese people expressed before the elections had been confirmed.

The elections, they insisted, were not a free and fair test of the opinion of the people of Guyana. They were a clumsily managed and a blatant fraud designed to perpetuate the rule of the People's National Congress.

Lord Avebury made several pointed observations to substantiate the findings of members of the Team. He boldly declared that like a voracious reptile, the PNC has crunched the institutions of democracy in Guyana.

"The breaking and bending of laws by the PNC was on such a scale that opposition parties were fighting with both hands tied behind their backs. The right of association and freedom of expression were repeatedly violated during the campaign," Lord Avebury remarked, and made other observations which follow:—

* The state-owned CHRONICLE newspaper, Guyana's only daily, read like an election broadsheet for the PNC.

- * The non-state press was being slowly killed off by the squeezing of its newsprint jugular.
- * PNC thugs attacked opposition meetings, sometimes with police standing by doing nothing.
- * Opposition parties were refused permission to hold meetings, or given permission at the last minute.
- * Government buildings, vehicles, constables and personnel were deployed throughout the campaign in the service of the PNC.
- * Public employees have been victimised or dismissed for holding anti-PNC views.
- * Ballot papers could not have been sent to the 47,000 voters on the overseas list because many of their addresses were totally garbled and incomprehensible.
- * Copies of the Official Gazette, containing vital election information, were as rare as snow in a tropical island.
- * The Chief Election Officer was incommunicado for most of the campaign.
- * The Elections Commission which was meant to 'exercise general direction and supervision' over the elections, was the toothless poodle of the PNC.

Guyana on Threshold of New Struggles

The fraudulent results of the December elections were predictable. The PNC took 77.04% of the votes and 53 of the 65 seats in the Parliament. The People's Progressive Party, which enjoys continued popular support in Guyana and which at the last free and fair elections held in 1964 polled 46% of the votes, was given 19.03% and 10 parliamentary seats. The remaining two seats went to the mini rightwing United Force, the third party which contested the elections.

In a post-election reaction the PPP stated that the Guyanese people had witnessed a military coup with a

difference on the evening of December 15, 1980. "The combined force of the military, police and PNC thugs, working in unison, took charge of the ballot boxes under the threat of a massive display of military might to defeat the will of the people and maintain the PNC in power."

Confident that it had scored a resounding victory at the polls, the PPP explained that its decision to contest the elections has been vindicated by the militant struggles its stand has engendered among the people for free and fair elections, by confirming and strengthening the total internal isolation of the PNC and by demonstrating to the international community the unpopularity of the PNC and its fraudulent manipulation of the electoral process which will contribute to its international isolation.

Since 1968, the PPP has carried out national and international struggles to focus attention on the rigging of elections in Guyana. In 1968 and 1973 the PPP stood virtually alone. New forces joined the struggle against the referendum in 1978. For the 1980 elections, the struggles of the PPP and other political groups have finally borne fruit in the presence of the team of International Observers. Apart from the padding of the voters' list and the disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of PPP supporters, the Observers were able to see how the Elections Commission had been stripped of its vital powers.

Gail Teixeira, the PPP representative on the Elections Commission, resigned in protest after denouncing the fraudulent elections. In her letter of resignation, she said that all the things she had warned the Commission before-hand would happen, came to pass.

"I foresaw the intervention of the military taking over the ballot boxes and warned the Commission. December 15, saw the military in full command. However, I never envisaged that the Counting Agents for the People's Progressive Party would not have been allowed to be present for the counting of the votes. This alone makes the elections illegal and invalid.

"As a member of the Commission, I was refused entry to the Ruimveldt Multilateral School. The letter of my

appointment to the Commission by President Chung in 1979 and the letter from the Chairman of the Commission permitting me to enter all polling stations and counting centres, were not accepted.

"I wish to denounce the election results as totally fraudulent having resulted from the most devious and undemocratic means yet used in this country's history."

The election fraud opened the floodgate to sour criticisms and condemnation of the PNC regime from the Caribbean in particular. While it was generally agreed that the December events were an ugly display of political rape, the February 18th., Movement of Trinidad and Tobago rightly saw the PNC regime after the elections as being in fundamental contradiction with the people of Guyana. It insisted that that contradiction must be resolved — one way or the other.

The PPP has expressed the view that the elections have ushered in a new phase in the struggle. "The working people of Guyana are now poised on the threshold of new and more significant struggles, and the election campaign and struggles waged by the PPP have better equipped them with stronger unity, further mobilisation and a grim determination to deliver the final blows to the corrupt, minority PNC regime," the party said in a statement.

It was clear that the PPP's decision to name candidates for the elections was a tactical one. At no point did the Party see the electoral struggle, important as it was as the sole or main vehicle for attaining power for the oppressed working people of Guyana. In its analysis, the organisation saw the elections as part of the process in the revolutionary struggle of the masses against the reactionary petty-bourgeois PNC regime.

The PPP harbours no illusions about the immediate future. As social conditions worsen, further contradiction between the regime and the masses will manifest itself openly. The regime cannot contain the tide of revolt with police-army methods. The regime will be forced to relent by the forceful struggles of the people who have to wrest free and fair elections by whatever means they are forced

to adopt.

Organise and Resist! This is the call to the people. The new situation warrants a higher level of organisation and unity of struggle. The People's Progressive Party has pledged to reinforce its parliamentary work with an intensification of its extra-parliamentary activities. It has pledged to work for the building of strategic left unity and the formation of a National Patriotic Front.

Guyana is indeed on the threshold of more vigorous struggles. The reactionary leadership of the labour movement, under growing pressures from its rank and file is in a tailspin. The regime, showing greater signs of internal power struggles over the spoils of office, is relying increasingly on its military might for survival. The oppressors have chosen their weapons. It is left for the masses to choose theirs in what will be a protracted struggle for the restoration of democracy and majority rule in Guyana.