



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Co-Operative Citizens? Development, Work and Protest in Guyana, c. 1970–1985

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## Abstract

Histories of Third Worldism have received renewed attention from historians in the past decade. Much of the resulting scholarship has focused on the international to the exclusion of the national. This article addresses this relative neglect by focusing on a particular iteration of Third World nation-state-building: co-operative socialism in Forbes Burnham's Guyana. Refuting the argument that co-operative socialism was imitative and implemented for reasons of political expediency only, the article contends that Burnham's doctrine should be regarded as a meaningful attempt at remaking Guyana's society and economy through its core principles of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and self-discipline. These principles gave rise to a specific conception of citizenship in 1970s Guyana, where the People's National Congress (PNC) sought to link political belonging and participation with a moral ethic premised on the notion of hard work in service of the nation. The article examines how this collectivist understanding of citizenship gave rise to a particular set of struggles at the turn of the 1980s, as the co-operative republic began to collapse. What emerged from these struggles was an alternate but parallel imagining of citizenship espoused by the Working People's Alliance (WPA), which rejected the PNC's vanguardism in favour of empowering the Guyanese people through the creation of non-hierarchical systems of collective authority. The article concludes by arguing that the failure of the WPA's attempt to overthrow the PNC through popular revolt signified the ends of decolonization and Third Worldism in the Caribbean, and the beginnings of new struggles against new forms of coloniality in the guise of the emerging neoliberal and good governance agendas.

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## Introduction

The study of decolonization has become one of the most dynamic fields of historical inquiry. This vibrancy can be attributed to the increased adoption of postcolonial and transnational methodologies. These approaches have encouraged historians to abandon national and imperial frameworks in favour of perspectives that consider the plural and contested ends of empire beyond the formal attainment of “flag independence”.<sup>1</sup> One outcome of these historiographical developments has been a better understanding of the interconnected and mutable character of anti-imperial, nationalist, pan-ethnic, and Third Worldist movements.<sup>2</sup> These were projects that emerged across imperial spaces over the course of the twentieth century, as nationalist elites, intellectuals, revolutionaries, civil society activists, and colonial subjects questioned what to do with empire and its inequities. At no time were such uncertainties more apparent than following the conclusion of World War II. The development of mass-based nationalist parties after 1945 fuelled expectations regarding independence and created the dilemma of what would arise from the imperial ruins. Elites and subalterns responded to this predicament by constructing cosmopolitan futures and parochial pasts in order to define the configuration of the nation state, particularly in terms of its external borders, its internal demographics, and domestic power sharing arrangements.<sup>3</sup> The “politics of belonging” was closely linked to another key issue: the difficulty of reconciling the need to advance individual rights and protections with the collective imperatives of state-building and economic modernization.<sup>4</sup> This challenge shaped discussions concerning the importance of state sovereignty and national interest relative to the pursuit of peaceful coexistence, multilateralism through reformed international institutions, and Third World solidarity.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, “Rethinking Decolonization: A New Research Agenda for the Twenty-First Century”, in *idem* (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 1–22; Gyan Prakash, Michael Laffan, and Nikhil Menon, “Introduction: The Postcolonial Moment”, in *idem* (eds), *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia* (London, 2018), pp. 1–10.

<sup>2</sup>Tim Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2021); Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015); R. Joseph Parrott and Mark Atwood Lawrence (eds), *The Tricontinental Revolution: Third World Radicalism and the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2022); Michele Louro, Carolien Stolte, Heather Streets-Salter, and Sana Tannoury-Karam (eds), *The League Against Imperialism: Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden, 2020); David Featherstone, Christian Høgsbjerg, and Alan Rice (eds), *Revolutionary Lives of the Red and Black Atlantic since 1917* (Manchester, 2022).

<sup>3</sup>Joya Chatterji, “South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946–1970”, *The Historical Journal*, 55:4 (2012), pp. 1049–1071; Jeremy Prestholdt, “Politics of the Soil: Separatism, Autochthony, and Decolonization at the Kenyan Coast”, *The Journal of African History*, 55:2 (2014), pp. 249–270; Jean M. Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison, WI, 1993); Taylor Sherman, “Migration, Citizenship and Belonging in Hyderabad (Deccan), 1946–1956”, in Taylor C. Sherman, William Gould, and Sarah Ansari (eds), *From Subjects to Citizens: Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan, 1947–1970* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 90–118; Emma Hunter (ed.), *Citizenship, Belonging, and Political Community in Africa Dialogues between Past and Present* (Athens, OH, 2016).

<sup>4</sup>Emma Hunter, “Dutiful Subjects, Patriotic Citizens, and the Concept Of ‘Good Citizenship’ in Twentieth-Century Tanzania”, *The Historical Journal*, 56:1 (2013), pp. 257–277, esp. p. 271.

<sup>5</sup>Christopher J. Lee, “Introduction Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung”, in *idem* (ed.), *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens, OH, 2010), pp. 1–42, esp. pp. 14–15.

For those involved in the subsequent debates, the seemingly contradictory positions on these issues were not irreconcilable. This was particularly true of nationalist elites, who argued invented pasts and “indigenous” customs would become national traditions that offered a pathway to cohesive multi-ethnic futures; the creation of strong centralized states and the realization of plans for economic development would protect individual liberties and livelihoods; and support for Third World revolution would strengthen national sovereignty.<sup>6</sup> That said, regardless of elites’ faith in these outcomes, the questions, doubts, and conflicts their visions generated, both domestically and internationally, underscore a crucial point: decolonization and its aftermath was a contingent moment in time when multiple possibilities appeared to be within reach.<sup>7</sup> Historians have been encouraged to treat these postcolonial imaginaries as meaningful attempts at “world-making”.<sup>8</sup> Many of the resulting histories have been concerned with diplomacy, statecraft, and international law.<sup>9</sup> Inevitably, this has led to a greater focus on the role of itinerant elites and their efforts to organize various forms of South–South cooperation, which aimed to create a more equitable global order.<sup>10</sup> By comparison, few historians have considered the implications of these world-making projects for domestic state-building efforts, or what the “socialist globalization” agenda meant for ordinary citizens of Third World nations, even though it is widely acknowledged that Third Worldism was as much about the national as it was the international.<sup>11</sup> This relative neglect has contributed to a perception that left-wing Third World states’ domestic socialist agendas were either poor imitations of their European equivalents or they were *façades* which were fabricated for reasons of *realpolitik*, rather than because they reflected their architects’ moral and ideological convictions.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup>James Jeffrey Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (New York, 2016), especially Byrne’s concluding chapter; and Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia, PA, 2017).

<sup>7</sup>Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective”, *The Journal of African History*, 49:2 (2008), pp. 167–98; *Op. Cit.*, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton, NJ, 2014).

<sup>8</sup>Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ, 2019); Eric Helleiner, *Forgotten Foundations of Bretton Woods: International Development and the Making of the Postwar Order* (Ithaca, NY, 2014); Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (Berkeley, CA, 2021).

<sup>9</sup>Christopher J. Lee (ed.), *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens, OH, 2010); and Luis Eslava Michael Fakhri and Vasuki Nesiah (eds), *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Pasts and Pending Futures* (Cambridge, 2017).

<sup>10</sup>Afro-Asian Research Network (<https://afroasiannetworks.com/>) has provided an important corrective to histories of the Third World concerned with state elites and their diplomatic initiatives. See the articles associated with Su Lin Lewis’ and Carolien Stolte’s “Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War”, *Journal of World History*, 30:1 (2019), pp. 1–19.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Vanessa Ogle’s discussion of the struggle over state rights during the 1970s: “State Rights against Private Capital: The ‘New International Economic Order’ and the Struggle over Aid, Trade, and Foreign Investment, 1962–1981”, *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 5:2 (2014), pp. 211–234. The term “socialist globalization” is adapted from: Johanna Brockman, “Socialist Globalization against Capitalist Neocolonialism: The Economic Ideas Behind the New International Economic Order”, *Humanity*, 6:1 (2015), pp. 109–128.

<sup>12</sup>Harry Verhoeven, “What Is to Be Done? Rethinking Socialism(s) and Socialist Legacies in a Postcolonial World”, *Third World Quarterly*, 42:3 (2021), pp. 449–464, esp. p. 451. For an earlier

This has certainly been the case for Guyana's Forbes Burnham, who ruled from independence in 1966 until his death in 1985. Critics of Burnham rightly point out that during this period Guyana became a de facto one-party state, where political violence and economic predation flourished.<sup>13</sup> The devastating consequences of Burnham's regime for Guyana and its people should not be forgotten.<sup>14</sup> However, to focus only on these aspects of Burnham's premiership is to overlook the ways in which the People's National Congress (PNC) sought to transform Guyana's social structures and political economy through its programme of co-operative socialism. Far from being a set of derivative ideas or being subservient to the imperatives of retaining political power, the PNC's co-operativism was a mutable and "heterodox" form of socialism, which drew inspiration from local circumstances in Guyana and ideas associated with the wider Third World project.<sup>15</sup> The aim was to remedy the socio-cultural legacies of colonialism, reverse historic patterns of underdevelopment, and thereby empower the Guyanese postcolonial state and people.<sup>16</sup>

A key aspect of the PNC's efforts to build the co-operative republic was its conception of citizenship. The PNC's understanding of citizenship reflected certain intersecting assumptions relating to race, gender, class, and generation, which were held by the party's predominantly middle-class Afro-Guyanese leadership and had to be accommodated with its revolutionary aims for remaking Guyanese society.<sup>17</sup> This tension contributed to the emergence of a citizenship regime that constructed

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collection that warned against the dangers of analysing socialism in terms of "abstract ideals" divorced from "concrete" realities, see C.M. Hann (ed.) *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice* (London, 1993).

<sup>13</sup>Officially, Guyana did not become a one-party state, but the PNC did all it could to limit the political space available to opposition parties and civil society groups without proscribing them. From the late 1960s onwards, press freedoms were restricted; the judiciary, the police and military, and the civil service became indivisible from the PNC; elections were rigged; and political opponents were targeted by increasingly repressive laws and by pro-PNC paramilitaries groups. On the PNC's authoritarianism, see Percy C. Hintzen, *The Costs of Regime Survival: Racial Mobilization, Elite Domination, and Control of the State in Guyana and Trinidad* (Cambridge, 1989); Chaitram Singh, *Guyana: Politics in a Plantation Society* (New York, 1988); Elucid A. Rose, *Dependency and Socialism in the Modern Caribbean: Superpower Intervention in Guyana, Jamaica, and Grenada, 1970–1985* (Lanham, MD, 2002).

<sup>14</sup>It should be emphasized that this article does not seek to rehabilitate Burnham's regime in any way. Rather, the aim is to treat seriously its socialist state-building project by exploring what factors shaped its rise and fall, and the implications of the timing of its demise for our understanding of the intertwined chronologies of decolonization and Third Worldism. In doing so, this article seeks to build on the work of Moe Taylor who has encouraged historians to interrogate the content of the PNC's co-operative socialism. See Moe Taylor, "Walter Rodney, Forbes Burnham, and the Specter of Pseudo-Socialism", *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 45:2 (2020), pp. 193–211.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>16</sup>The idea of creating "a new society" and a "new breed of Guyanese", as PNC minister Hamilton Green put it, was a reoccurring feature in PNC publications and speeches. For the Green reference, see British Library (hereafter, BL), "PNC's Aim to Achieve Self-Reliance", *New Nation*, 17 November 1974, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup>Nowhere was this tension more apparent than in the pages of the PNC's *New Nation*. In the party's official newspaper, articles about the PNC's efforts to transform Guyana into a multiracial and egalitarian socialist utopia sat alongside articles and opinion-editorials, which lamented the incidence of immorality and ill-discipline in Guyanese society. These latter pieces often drew on colonial-era racial stereotypes, which characterized working-class Afro-Guyanese peoples as socially deviant, whilst also portraying Amerindian and Indo-Guyanese peoples as static and culturally conservative peoples, except in cases where socio-economic change was thought to have had disruptive and demoralizing consequences. For indicative examples, see University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-M), Labadie Collection, "Let's Talk

carefully delineated roles for specific categories of Guyanese citizen in accordance with the overall aims of the PNC's development strategy. The outcome was an often-contradictory approach to citizenship, which promised equality and liberation through multiracialism and enhanced legal and constitutional protections, but also effectively placed limits on particular citizens' freedoms because of their assigned roles in the PNC's development plans. Invariably, this involved privileging Afro-Guyanese men's status as waged workers and peasant farmers in productive service of the nation, whilst reducing their female counterparts to their reproductive roles of wives and mothers, even as the PNC promised to free women through the co-operative socialist revolution.<sup>18</sup> What was consistent, however, was the PNC's repeated emphasis on the importance of hard work to the co-operative republic and its revolution.<sup>19</sup> As part of the PNC's efforts to create a socialist economy, which included the nationalization of Guyana's principal export sectors, import substitution, and the fulfilment of "basic needs", the party promised emancipation, material advancement, and meaningful political participation, if all Guyanese citizens adopted a work ethic premised on the principles self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and self-discipline.<sup>20</sup>

The various connections the PNC made between work and citizenship were by no means unique to Guyana, but the ways in which the party framed this relationship contributed to a particular set of struggles as the co-operative republic began to collapse in the late 1970s.<sup>21</sup> During this period, a multiracial and inter-class movement arose in opposition to the PNC. Central to this campaign, which was coordinated but not determined by the Working People's Alliance (WPA), was the demand that the right to dignified forms of work be realized, promises of political and economic liberation be fulfilled, and state power be devolved to the Guyanese people through institutions organized according to the principle of collective authority.<sup>22</sup> These were not cynical or instrumental claims designed to

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About Indiscipline at Work, Play, Home, School, in the Streets", *New Nation*, 26 April 1981, p. 6; "Kids Smoking in Front of Adults, Using Foul Language", *New Nation*, 18 October 1981, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup>Steve Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender, 1838–1985* (Kingston, 2008), ch. 8.

<sup>19</sup>The relationship between work, citizenship, and, equality was a reoccurring and prominent theme in PNC statements and speeches. In a 1978 budget address, to take just one example, Kenneth Hope defined the PNC's conception of egalitarianism in terms of "equality of opportunity based only on citizenship and willingness to work". This, Hope claimed, would promote equality in accordance with the principles of multiracialism. Third Parliament of Guyana Under the Constitution of Guyana, First Session 1973 to 1978, Budget Speech by F.E. Hope, Minister of Finance, 27 February 1978, Sessional Paper No. 1, 1978, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup>Moe Taylor, "One Hand Can't Clap": Guyana and North Korea, 1974–1985", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 17:1 (2015), pp. 41–63. For a discussion of the wider context to the self-reliance concept and its relationship to postcolonial development, see Vivien Chang, "Beyond the NIEO: Self-Reliance as an Alternative Vision of Post-Colonial Development", in Erez Manela and Heather Streets-Salter (eds), *The Anticolonial Transnational: Imaginaries, Mobilities, and Networks in the Struggle against Empire* (Cambridge, 2023), pp. 219–241.

<sup>21</sup>See, for example, Franco Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa* (Albany, NY, 2011).

<sup>22</sup>It is not my intent to discount other opposition parties and groups, namely, the People's Progressive Party. However, at the turn of the 1980s, the WPA and its offshoots were arguably the most innovative and dynamic of all the groups that opposed Burnham. There is merit, therefore, in focusing almost

speak only to the PNC's co-operative socialism and its accompanying legal, discursive, and material practices of citizenship. Rather, such demands constituted a parallel but alternate imagining of the postcolonial state, its political economy, institutions, and citizenship regime. Both the PNC and the WPA believed rights and freedoms could be protected through collective means, but whereas the PNC emphasized the paramountcy of the party, state, and nation above all other individual and shared interests, the WPA advocated non-hierarchical forms of organization and the realization of change through the people themselves. In this way, the WPA sought to enable ordinary Guyanese people to remake their world and answer the questions that had been posed by decolonization but had been left unresolved. What did freedom from imperialism and colonialism signify? What did political and economic sovereignty entail? And, how could dignity, respect, and self-worth be acquired?

### Co-Operative Socialism and Development

By the late 1960s, the hopes and expectations of independence were fading across the Anglophone Caribbean. Regional governments' adoption of the so-called Puerto Rico model of development produced impressive macro-economic growth rates, but also widening inequalities; inter-party competition contributed to low-intensity political violence, particularly in Jamaica; and postcolonial elites were reliant upon the coercive apparatus of the state to consolidate their authority and suppress dissent.<sup>23</sup> This situation contributed to a series of protests and campaigns for change, such as the 1968 "Rodney Riots" in Jamaica and the February 1970 Revolution in Trinidad, both of which drew inspiration from the Caribbean variants of Black Power and Third World radicalism, and these movements' respective critiques of imperialism and neocolonialism.<sup>24</sup>

In Guyana, Forbes Burnham, the prime minister and leader of the People's National Congress (PNC), observed events elsewhere in the Caribbean with unease.<sup>25</sup> Guyana's transition to independence had been more troubled than most. Guyana had been pushed to the brink of civil war in the early 1960s. Constitutional meddling by the imperial authorities and a CIA-sponsored campaign of industrial unrest had

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exclusively on the WPA, particularly since the WPA's ethos could be characterized as a "dialogical" in contrast to the PNC's "pedagogical" approach. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Legacies of Bandung: Decolonisation and the Politics of Culture", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40:46 (2005), pp. 4812–4818.

<sup>23</sup>The Puerto Rico model involved tax concessions to private enterprise and a managerial for the state in terms of infrastructure provision. On the socio-economic and political issues affecting the Caribbean during late 1960s, see Fitzroy Ambursley, "Jamaica: From Michael Manley to Edward Seaga", in Fitzroy Ambursley and Robin Cohen (eds), *Crisis in the Caribbean* (New York, 1983), pp. 72–104; Kate Quinn, "Conventional Politics or Revolution: Black Power and the Radical Challenge to the Westminster Model in the Caribbean", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 53:1 (2015), pp. 71–94; Obika Gray, *Radicalism and Social Change in Jamaica, 1960–1972* (Knoxville, TN, 1991), chs 3–6.

<sup>24</sup>See the relevant chapters in Kate Quinn (ed.) *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville, FL, 2014).

<sup>25</sup>Kate Quinn, "Sitting on a Volcano: Black Power in Burnham's Guyana", in Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville, FL, 2014), pp. 136–158. For a discussion of Black Power and its impact on Guyanese politics, see Michael O. West, "Seeing Darkly: Guyana, Black Power and Walter Rodney's Expulsion from Jamaica", *Small Axe*, 12:1 (2008), pp. 93–104.

destabilized successive governments led by the Marxist, Cheddi Jagan, and his People's Progressive Party (PPP).<sup>26</sup> This political instability contributed to interracial violence involving the PPP, the PNC, and their respective supporters amongst the Indo- and Afro-Guyanese populations.<sup>27</sup> The worst of this violence occurred in the interior bauxite mining town of Wismar-Mackenzie, and rural villages situated along Guyana's coastal sugar belt. The violence was significant not just for its tragic human cost, but because it contributed to the emergence of racially segregated communities. The growing racial polarization was exacerbated by the PNC and the PPP, both of which deployed racially coded language to warn their supporters about the possible implications of an opposition victory. It was out of this chaos and disorder that the PNC emerged to form a coalition government at the 1964 elections before leading Guyana to independence in 1966.<sup>28</sup>

Guyana's fractured political landscape, in combination with the region-wide unrest of the late 1960s, convinced Burnham of the need to ensure that the PNC's programme spoke directly to the grievances and aspirations associated with Caribbean Black Power movements.<sup>29</sup> Burnham told one interviewer that Black Power in Guyana meant "the fight for dignity and equality for all non-white peoples".<sup>30</sup> However, although some moves were made to recognize aspects of Indo-Guyanese and Amerindian cultural life, the PNC's principal focus was on promoting Afro-Guyanese culture.<sup>31</sup> To this end, Burnham established a working relationship with Eusi Kwayana's African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA), an organization with Black Power sympathies and ties, even if it did not necessarily define itself in such terms.<sup>32</sup> Burnham also sought to position himself as a leader of a "model

<sup>26</sup>US–Guyana relations are beyond the scope of this article. Briefly, it is worth noting that the US's determination to prevent Jagan and PPP from overseeing Guyana's independence did not translate into unwavering support for Burnham thereafter. During the 1970s and early 1980s, US support for Burnham's government varied according to the administration, particularly once the PNC embraced co-operative socialism. Republican administrations, including Nixon's and Reagan's, were hostile towards Burnham and the PNC, but this hostility was largely restricted to the withdrawal of financial assistance and diplomatic tension. In contrast, Democrat administrations were more willing to engage with Burnham. Under Johnson in the late 1960s, this included significant financial support and the Carter administration sought to renew this commitment a decade later, but this support softened following the Jonestown tragedy. For an extended discussion of the US's role in destabilizing Guyana's transition to independence and its post-independence relations with Burnham's PNC, see Stephen G. Rabe, *US Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005).

<sup>27</sup>On the formation of the PNC, which emerged from the PPP, and the subsequent PNC–PPP conflict, see Colin A. Palmer, *Cheddi Jagan and the Politics of Power: British Guiana's Struggle for Independence* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), ch. 6.

<sup>28</sup>The best account of Guyana's decolonization story remains Spencer Mawby, *Ordering Independence: The End of Empire in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1947–1968* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 182–204.

<sup>29</sup>Kate Quinn, "Black Power in Caribbean Context", in *idem* (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville, FL, 2014), pp. 25–50, esp. pp. 27–32.

<sup>30</sup>"Seeking a New Home in Africa", *Sunday Graphic*, 27 October 1968, cited in Tyrone Ferguson, *To Survive Sensibly or to Court Heroic Death: Management of Guyana's Political Economy, 1965–85* (Georgetown, 1999), p. 25.

<sup>31</sup>Ferguson, *Op. Cit.*, chs 2 and 6.

<sup>32</sup>Quinn, "Sitting on a Volcano", pp. 138–141. For a discussion of Kwayana's intellectual thinking and political activism, see Nigel Westmaas, "An Organic Activist: Eusi Kwayana, Guyana and Global Pan-Africanism", in Kate Quinn (ed.), *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville, 2014), pp. 159–178.

progressive black government” by hosting a number of African-American civil rights activists in Guyana to promote the PNC’s Third Worldist credentials.<sup>33</sup>

British diplomats attributed the PNC’s manoeuvring to Burnham’s ideological flexibility and his determination to hold onto power by whatever means necessary.<sup>34</sup> True, the 1968 elections were rigged and political patronage was routinely distributed to supporters, but Burnham went further than most of his regional counterparts to demonstrate the PNC represented a decisive break with the colonial past.<sup>35</sup> Nothing symbolized this resolve more than the PNC’s decision to cut ties with the British crown and declare Guyana a co-operative republic in February 1970.<sup>36</sup> The shift to republican status was accompanied by the adoption of socialist-inspired rhetoric and policies. In speeches and publications, PNC representatives increasingly referenced ideas associated with non-alignment, economic sovereignty, and Third Worldism.<sup>37</sup> Other revolutionary socialist states, such as Julius Nyerere’s Tanzania, Josep Tito’s Yugoslavia, and Kim Il Sun’s North Korea, were cited by the PNC as potential models for Guyana’s co-operative republic. The result was that many PNC policies drew on ideas developed elsewhere in the Third World, including the Guyanese versions of Yugoslavia’s “Peoples’ Militia” and North Korea’s “Mass Games”.<sup>38</sup> These domestic efforts were matched by equivalent foreign policy initiatives. The PNC provided material support to liberation movements struggling against white minority rule in southern Africa, and, in 1972, Guyana established diplomatic relations with Cuba and the People’s Republic of China.<sup>39</sup>

The PNC was not the only Guyanese political party to take a decisive leftward turn at this time. Hitherto, the PPP had tempered its Marxist principles in accordance with strategic considerations relating to the Cold War context of Guyana’s decolonization struggle and domestic political factors, including its reliance on the support of the more conservative elements of the Indo-Guyanese community.<sup>40</sup> However, the PPP opted to abandon its previous caution following its 1968 election defeat.<sup>41</sup> In 1969,

<sup>33</sup>Quinn, “Sitting on a Volcano”, pp. 136–158, quote at p. 148. More generally on African American intellectuals and activists in Guyana, see Russell Rickford, “African American Expats, Guyana, and the Pan-African Ideal in the 1970s”, Keisha N. Blain, Christopher Cameron, and Ashley D. Farmer (eds), *New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition* (Evanston, IL, 2018), pp. 233–251.

<sup>34</sup>The National Archives (TNA), FCO 63/465, Ken G. Ritchie, British High Commission, Georgetown, to T.R.M. Sewell, Caribbean Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 9 May 1970.

<sup>35</sup>Rose, *Dependency and Socialism*, pp. 177–178.

<sup>36</sup>TNA, FCO 63/107, Ken G. Ritchie, British High Commissioner, Georgetown, to Alec Douglas-Home, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 1 October 1970.

<sup>37</sup>Guyana Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Guyana and Non-Alignment, 1955–1983* (Georgetown, 1984).

<sup>38</sup>See Moe Taylor’s “Every Citizen a Soldier: The Guyana People’s Militia, 1976–1985”, *Journal of Global South Studies*, 36:2 (2019), pp. 279–311, esp. pp. 282–283; and “‘Only a Disciplined People Can Build a Nation’: North Korean Mass Games and Third Worldism in Guyana, 1980–1992”, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 13:4 (2015), pp. 1–25.

<sup>39</sup>Amanda T. Perry, “Sovereign Alliances: Reading the Romance between Cuba and the Anglophone Caribbean in the 1970s”, in Kerry Bystrom, Monica Popescu, and Katherine Zien (eds), *The Cultural Cold War and the Global South: Sites of Contest and Communitas* (New York, 2021), p. 79.

<sup>40</sup>On the ethno-political dimensions to PPP policy during the early 1960s, see Leo Despres, *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana* (Chicago, IL, 1967), ch. 6.

<sup>41</sup>Singh, *Guyana: Politics in a Plantation Society*, p. 50.

Jagan declared the PPP to be Marxist–Leninist, he aligned the party with Moscow, and called for the nationalization of the economy and greater forms of worker control.<sup>42</sup> In response, the PNC sought to distinguish itself from what it regarded as the imported Marxism of the pro-Moscow PPP by emphasizing that its turn to co-operativism was principally concerned with addressing local issues rooted in Guyana’s histories of slavery and colonialism. Specifically, the PNC claimed co-operative socialism would transform the “small man” into a “real man” through various educational, economic, and political initiatives premised on the principles of self-reliance, self-discipline, and direct democratic control.<sup>43</sup> This objective was simultaneously radical and conservative.<sup>44</sup> On the one hand, the PNC’s emphasis on empowerment spoke to the Black Power critique of the postcolonial condition and the continued disenfranchisement of Caribbean peoples.<sup>45</sup> On the other, the PNC’s aim of fostering discipline through self-help reflected the moralizing worldview of the party’s creole elites, who, much like their counterparts elsewhere in the region, believed it was incumbent upon them to inculcate a sense of civic duty in the citizenry because colonialism had eroded working-class Caribbean peoples’ sense of purpose.<sup>46</sup> This moral vision for the new republic was accompanied by the subsequent development of three core beliefs, which would shape the trajectory and content of the PNC’s co-operative socialism: co-operative societies as the basic unit of production and consumption; public ownership of Guyana’s principal economic sectors and public utilities; and the “paramouncy” of the party.<sup>47</sup>

Senior PNC figures frequently claimed that the embrace of co-operative socialism in this form was the outcome of the party’s intellectual heritage dating back to the early 1960s.<sup>48</sup> In practice, the different ideological strands that informed the PNC’s nebulous concept of co-operative socialism did not emerge fully formed. At the

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>Forbes Burnham, *The Small Man, a Real Man* (Georgetown, 1969). For a discussion of the “new man” concept in other decolonizing and postcolonial contexts, which shared some parallels with the PNC’s vision for the “real man”, see Katrin Bromber and Jakob Kraus, “Introduction: Shaping the ‘New Man’ in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East: Practices between Hope and Anxiety (1940s–1960s)” *Comparativ*, 28(5), pp. 7–21.

<sup>44</sup>I am grateful to Spencer Mawby for pointing out the conservative strand that was inherent to Burnham and the PNC.

<sup>45</sup>For comparable policy initiatives in 1970s Jamaica under Michael Manley, see Michaeline A. Crichlow, *Negotiating Caribbean Freedom: Peasants and The State in Development* (Lanham, MD, 2005), ch. 4.

<sup>46</sup>Taylor notes that a high proportion of leading PNC figures were teachers and he suggests their professional background accounted for party’s paternalism: “One Hand Can’t Clap”, pp. 56–57. The classic statement on creole elites’ paternalistic attitudes is Percy C. Hintzen’s “Reproducing Domination Identity and Legitimacy Constructs in the West Indies”, *Social Identities*, 3:1 (1997), pp. 47–76.

<sup>47</sup>On these first two beliefs, senior PNC figures began to sketch out the broad ideas in speeches delivered to the party’s thirteenth annual congress. However, the policy of ‘party paramouncy’, which made the PNC indivisible from the state, was not declared until 1974. See respectively Senate House Library, London (hereafter, SHL), *Policy for the New Co-Operative Republic, the 13th Annual Conference of the People’s National Congress, Queen’s College, 2–8 April 1970* (Georgetown, 1970); and *Declaration of Sophia: Address by Forbes Burnham at a Special Congress to Mark the 10th Anniversary of the PNC in Government* (Georgetown, 1974).

<sup>48</sup>TNA, FCO 63/457, Forbes Burnham, Leaders Address, 13th Annual Congress of the PNC, Queen’s College, 1970, p. 2 and pp. 7–9.

turn of the 1970s, PNC representatives were concerned with sketching out the broad contours of the party's co-operativism at the expense of a specific understanding of its socialism.<sup>49</sup> The PNC made it clear that Guyana's co-operative movement would expand beyond its traditional focus on credit and savings to include agricultural, marketing, trading, and construction societies, and thereby become the third sector of the economy.<sup>50</sup> It was also envisaged that co-operatives would be created within public corporations to represent the interests of employees, consumers, and the state.<sup>51</sup> These ambitious plans enabled the architects of the PNC's co-operativism to reject claims that it was modelled on Western or Eastern European equivalents.<sup>52</sup> Instead, the PNC argued co-operativism was "rooted in the social and economic history" of Guyana, with the idealized collectivism of the post-emancipation free village movement cited as one precedent.<sup>53</sup> The PNC's belief in the uniqueness of its co-operative model led the government to argue that it represented a novel solution to Guyana's dependency and the problem of alienation under capitalism.<sup>54</sup> The PNC envisaged that co-operative societies concerned with production and consumption would reduce Guyana's vulnerability to the vicissitudes of external trade, and they would empower peasant smallholders, waged workers, and consumers by giving them a democratic stake in the means of production. In this way, the co-operative would become an "instrument of national development" because co-operatives' egalitarian principles would incentivize production, rationalize the use and distribution of resources, and reconcile individual needs and aspirations with the collective requirement for economic advancement.<sup>55</sup>

The initial focus on the co-operative component of the PNC's ideology meant that the government's conception of socialism only became more clearly defined in the years that followed the founding of the republic.<sup>56</sup> At the 1974 party congress, Burnham declared his belief in the "paramountcy of the party", which had the effect of rendering the distinctions between the PNC and the state obsolete.

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<sup>49</sup>See the papers presented at the 1970 party congress, many which contained policies ideas which could be characterized as "socialist" but were not identified as such by PNC representatives. SHL, *People's National Congress, Policy for the New Co-Operative Republic*, 13th Annual Conference of the PNC, Queen's College, 2–8 April 1970.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 115–123.

<sup>51</sup>SHL, *People's National Congress, Policy Paper Co-Operativism* (Georgetown, 1977), pp. 11–22.

<sup>52</sup>TNA, FCO 63/457, Forbes Burnham, Leaders Address, 13th Annual Congress of the PNC, Queen's College, 1970, pp. 7–9.

<sup>53</sup>SHL, Forbes Burnham, *Towards the Socialist Revolution*, Address at the First Biennial Conference of the PNC at Sophia, Georgetown, 18 August 1975 (Ruimveldt, 1975), p. 29. On the reference to the free village movement, see TNA, LAB 13/2776, "Comment on 'Toward a Socialist Revolution'", Peter Gantry, British High Commission, Georgetown, to James Callaghan, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 22 October 1975, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup>SHL, *Policy Paper Co-Operativism*, pp. 24–28.

<sup>55</sup>TNA, FCO 63/457, Forbes Burnham, Leaders Address, 13th Annual Congress of the PNC, Queen's College, 1970, pp. 6–9.

<sup>56</sup>One of the few statements to explicitly reference the direct connection between the PNC's co-operativism and socialism at the turn of the 1970s was an edited amalgamation of Burnham's speeches. This can be found in L.F.S. Burnham, "A Vision of the Co-Operative Republic", in L. Searwar (ed.) *Co-Operative Republic, Guyana 1970: A Study of Aspects of Our Way of Life* (Georgetown, 1970), pp. 9–16.

This was followed in 1976 by the announcement that the government intended to create a socialist society along Marxist–Leninist lines.<sup>57</sup> These bold assertions were accompanied by more specific explanations regarding the objectives of the PNC’s socialism. Party speeches emphasized the importance of generating surpluses for public good rather than private gain, the restriction of private property, and state ownership of national resources.<sup>58</sup> These policy objectives often emerged through engagement with particular issues and events, rather than from a set of beliefs rooted in a fixed understanding of socialism. The question of land ownership, for example, became a policy concern following the 1973 “land rebellion”. This protest movement, which was co-ordinated by ASCRIA, involved Afro- and Indo-Guyanese villagers occupying vacant lands owned by expatriate plantation companies.<sup>59</sup> Once these lands had been seized, the villagers established multiracial “People’s Committees” with the intention of administering the land according to collectivist principles.<sup>60</sup> This produced a tension in PNC policy when the government responded to the “rebellion” by committing itself to imposing limits on private property ownership, but not private enterprise, in spite of its contention that Guyana’s national resources should be publicly owned.<sup>61</sup> In short, the PNC’s co-operative socialism was created and reworked in real time, as Burnham’s government devised and implemented policies in response to the responsibilities and challenges of postcolonial statehood.

This dynamic was apparent in the case of the government’s 1972 development plan, which represented one of the PNC’s earliest expositions on co-operative socialism. During the 1950s and 1960s, colonial-era development strategies had focused on export-led growth through investment in agriculture, bauxite, and related transport and communication infrastructure.<sup>62</sup> The result was that successive development plans had entrenched Guyana’s dependence on foreign trade and investment.<sup>63</sup> Even the PNC’s first post-independence plan, which aimed to promote industrialization and agricultural diversification as part of a mixed economy, relied on foreign loans and generous tax concessions to private capital.<sup>64</sup> The 1972 plan was markedly different.<sup>65</sup> The plan set annual GDP targets, but its Guyanese planners criticized previous development initiatives for being too growth-centric

<sup>57</sup>SHL, *Declaration of Sophia*, Address by Leader of the PNC, Prime Minister Forbes Burnham at a Special Congress to Mark the 10th Anniversary of the PNC in Government, 14 December 1974, (Georgetown, 1974), p. 11; SHL, *Policy Paper Co-Operativism*, pp. 57–59.

<sup>58</sup>SHL, *Declaration of Sophia*, chs 5 and 7.

<sup>59</sup>For an account of the “rebellion”, see Matthew Quest, “Appendix”, in Eusi Kwayana, *The Bauxite Strike and the Old Politics* (Atlanta, GA, 2012), pp. 143–146.

<sup>60</sup>London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, 4463/B/01/01/001, “Guidelines: To Those Who Discover (Or Seize Sugar Lands)”, n.d.

<sup>61</sup>SHL, *Declaration of Sophia*, pp. 18–25.

<sup>62</sup>SHL, *Development Programme, 1960–64*, Sessional Paper No. 5/1959 (La Penitence, East Bank: British Guiana Lithographic Company, 1959); British *Guiana Development Programme 1966–1972* (Georgetown, 1966).

<sup>63</sup>Kempe R. Hope and Wilfred L. David, “Planning for Development in Guyana: The Experience from 1945 to 1973”, *Inter-American Economic Affairs*, 27:4, (1974), pp. 30–39.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 39–43.

<sup>65</sup>*Second Development Plan, 1972–1976* (Georgetown, 1973).

and too concerned with established sectors at the expense of implementing strategies that would develop the wider economy and raise Guyanese living standards and incomes in the longer term.<sup>66</sup> Rather than reinforce the existing structure of the economy, the PNC's new plan aimed to end Guyana's dependency by reducing unemployment to five per cent, diversifying exports, promoting import-substitution, and extending the developmental reach of the state into the interior, which was identified as a potential site for agricultural, livestock, and forestry initiatives.<sup>67</sup> In doing so, the plan, which was premised on a much greater role for the state at the expense of private enterprise, aimed to make "the basic necessities of life" available to Guyanese citizens in accordance with the government's objective of "feeding, clothing, and housing the nation" by 1976.<sup>68</sup>

### Nationalization and the Making of Co-Operative Citizens

Guyana was not alone in its abandonment of orthodox development strategies.<sup>69</sup> By the turn of the 1970s, many Third World policymakers and intellectuals, including the Caribbean's New World Group, had become critical of established development models.<sup>70</sup> This search for alternate development strategies was closely related to international efforts to re-think the operation and regulation of the global economy, particularly with regard to questions of economic sovereignty and the redistribution of wealth.<sup>71</sup> The PNC was an active participant in these discussions.<sup>72</sup> In 1972, the PNC hosted a conference for Non-Aligned Movement foreign ministers in Georgetown, which paved the way for the various United Nations declarations that comprised the emerging agenda for the New International Economic Order (NIEO).<sup>73</sup> The PNC became a strong advocate of the NIEO. At the 1975 heads of commonwealth conference in Jamaica, Burnham called for a restructuring of the global economy's institutions and regulatory framework, with the objective of ensuring that primary commodity producing nations received a

<sup>66</sup>It was for this reason that the PNC targeted increased investment in the forestry, construction, and manufacturing sectors. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82. On the criticism of previous plans, see SHL, Kenneth F.S. King, *A Great Future Together: The Development and Employment Plan*, Address at the 16th Annual Congress of the PNC at Queen's College on 8 May 1973 (La Penitence, 1973), pp. 1–2.

<sup>67</sup>World Bank, *Current Economic Position and Prospects of Guyana*, Volume 1, Main Report, 19 December 1973, p. 54. Shona Jackson argues that, in framing the interior as a space in need of "development", the characterization of the region's Amerindian peoples as a static and unchanging people was reinforced in PNC discourse. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, ch. 4, esp. p. 170.

<sup>68</sup>*Second Development Plan, 1972–1976*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>69</sup>Stephen J. Macekura, *The Mismeasure of Progress: Economic Growth and Its Critics* (Chicago, IL, 2020), ch. 3.

<sup>70</sup>On the New World group's origins, ideas, and impact, see Brian Meeks and Norman Girvan (eds), *The Thought of New World: The Quest for Decolonisation* (Kingston, 2010); Don D. Marshall, "New World Group of Dependency Scholars: Reflections of Caribbean Avant-Garde Movement", in Vandana Desai and Robert Potter (eds), *The Companion to Development Studies* (Abingdon, 2014), pp. 116–120; Rose, *Dependency and Socialism*, ch. 2.

<sup>71</sup>Ogle, "State Rights against Private Capital".

<sup>72</sup>Ferguson, *To Survive Sensibly or to Court Heroic Death*, ch. 8.

<sup>73</sup>SHL, *The Georgetown Declaration: The Action Programme for Economic Co-Operation and Related Documents*, Georgetown, Guyana, 8 to 12 August 1972 (Georgetown, 1972).

more equitable share of the wealth they produced.<sup>74</sup> These were not new demands. Since the founding of the co-operative republic, Burnham had referenced the insignificance of independence without a corresponding attempt to transform Guyana's economy. In 1970, Burnham's speech to the PNC's annual congress had criticized foreign capital, which extracted Guyana's wealth to the detriment of its people and this was followed by the passing of a resolution in favour of the state acquiring a fifty-one per cent stake in enterprises engaged in resource extraction.<sup>75</sup>

Congress's resolution represented a direct warning to Alcan, the parent company for the Demerara Bauxite Company (DEMBA), which was headquartered at Wismar-Mackenzie, where Guyana's most significant bauxite concessions were located. Guyana's bauxite industry was an archetypal example of neocolonial exploitation. Generous taxation and concessionary rights were compounded by Alcan's model of exporting unprocessed bauxite from Guyana to its North American smelters, which transformed this raw material into more valuable aluminium products. In return, Guyana was left with the negative effects of bauxite mining, in the form of environment spoliation, but it received little by way of economic return.<sup>76</sup> The "operational logic" of bauxite firms such as Alcan led Norman Girvan, the notable Jamaican political-economist, New World Group member, and adviser to the PNC government, to conclude that the only way the Caribbean's reserves could be used to service the material needs of the region's peoples was to nationalize the sector.<sup>77</sup> Girvan reached this conclusion as part of a negotiating team assembled by the PNC to investigate possible routes to "meaningful participation" in Guyana's bauxite industry. Initially, the PNC did not intend to nationalize DEMBA, but Alcan's refusal to compromise during the negotiations, which ran from December 1970 to February 1971, prompted Burnham to remark that, "it is better to die on your feet, than to live on your knees".<sup>78</sup> A few months later, on 15 July 1971, DEMBA was nationalized and ownership was transferred to the state-owned Guyana Bauxite Company (GUYBAU).<sup>79</sup>

The PNC celebrated the acquisition of DEMBA as the first meaningful act of economic independence.<sup>80</sup> This triumphalism masked emerging tensions,

<sup>74</sup>SHL, Forbes Burnham, *In the Cause of Humanity*, Prime Minister of Guyana's Address at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 1975 on the NIEO (Georgetown, 1975).

<sup>75</sup>TNA, FCO 63/457, Forbes Burnham, Leaders Address, 13th Annual Congress of the PNC, Queen's College, 1970, pp. 13 and 16.

<sup>76</sup>On the tax and environmental issues associated with bauxite mining, see, respectively, Norman Girvan, *Corporate Imperialism: Conflict and Expropriation* (Abingdon, [1976] 2018), p. 99 and pp. 164–165; and Michael Evenden, "Aluminium, Commodity Chains, and the Environmental History of the Second World War", *Environmental History*, 16:1 (2011), pp. 69–83, esp. 74–75.

<sup>77</sup>TNA, FCO 63/729, Advisory Note from Norman Girvan to Government of Guyana regarding Nationalisation, enclosed in Booker McConnell Limited to Sir Leslie Dawson at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 5 May 1971.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>79</sup>For an account of the negotiations, see Norman Girvan, "Bauxite: The Need to Nationalize, Part II", *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 2:2 (1971), pp. 91–98.

<sup>80</sup>For two typical examples of this celebratory tone, see BL, "Special Linden Supplement", *New Nation*, 30 May 1971, p. 7; BL, "We Put Trust in Linden Workers", *New Nation*, 11 July 1971, p. 1.

however.<sup>81</sup> Opponents of the PNC, including the Ratoon Group, which was comprised of University of Guyana scholars and students, criticized the terms of the nationalization agreement.<sup>82</sup> Ratoon supported the nationalization of DEMBA, but argued that the PNC's agreement amounted to a commercial transaction that did not address the historic exploitation of Guyana's resources.<sup>83</sup> Supporters of the PNC were equally circumspect. The industry's Afro-Guyanese mineworkers were concerned about the implications of DEMBA's nationalization for the outcome of ongoing pay negotiations and the long-term security of their pensions.<sup>84</sup> These uncertainties contributed to a two-week strike in April 1971.<sup>85</sup> The conduct of the strike reflected the workforce's growing support for ASCRIA and its advocacy of autonomous collective action and Black racial pride. The strike was coordinated by a leaderless group of rank-and-file workers, who referred to themselves as the "Committee of Ten". The Committee, which made it clear it was not opposed to nationalization, condemned the pro-PNC Guyana Mine Workers' Union (GMWU), and through its publication, "The Voice of the Workers", it called for a range of entitlements, including pay awards linked to production targets and more meaningful forms of worker participation.<sup>86</sup>

At a time when ASCRIA's alliance with the government was becoming increasingly conditional, the mineworkers' appropriation of government discourse on co-operativism and nationalization created a problem for the PNC.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, notwithstanding one or two clashes involving the police and striking workers, the PNC did all it could to reassure the workforce. The government promised to improve working and living conditions at Wismar-Mackenzie – which was renamed Linden (after Burnham) following nationalization.<sup>88</sup> These promises were given practical effect by the Tyndall Commission, which recommended a total pay award amounting to G\$1.7 million (G\$=Guyanese dollar), and the PNC pledged to safeguard workers' pensions by transferring them to a government scheme.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>These tensions did not deter the PNC from playing a leading role in the establishment of the International Bauxite Association (IBA) in 1974. The IBA's aims were described by Burnham in very much the same terms as the PNC's nationalization of DEMBA. See BL, "The Logic of the IBA", *New Nation*, 17 November 1974, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup>On Ratoon, see Nigel Westmaas, "1968 and the Social and Political Foundations and Impact of the 'New Politics' in Guyana", *Caribbean Studies*, 37:2 (2009), p. 112.

<sup>83</sup>"How not to nationalise!", *Ratoon*, No. 3, April 1971; "The Great Bauxite Robbery", *Ratoon*, No. 5, August 1971, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup>Bauxite workers were represented by Guyana Mineworkers' Union, which had approximately 4,000 members in 1970. "Guyana's Trade Unions", *Monthly Labour Review*, 93:11 (1970), p. 58.

<sup>85</sup>Kwayana, *The Bauxite Strike*, pp. 29–90.

<sup>86</sup>See the Committee's statements, which are reproduced in *Ibid.*, pp. 124–129.

<sup>87</sup>Quinn, "Sitting on a Volcano", p. 149.

<sup>88</sup>BL, "Low Cost Houses Soon for Linden", *New Nation*, 13 June 1971, p. 10; BL, "Tyndall Tribunal Fixes Big Increases", *The Sunday Chronicle*, 16 May 1971, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup>University of Guyana Library, Georgetown (UGL), *Report of the Arbitration Tribunal Appointed to Enquire into the Dispute between the Demerara Bauxite Company and the Guyana Mineworkers Union*; BL, "DEMBA: New Pension Plan", *The Sunday Chronicle*, 9 May 1971, p. 1; TNA, FCO 63/731, press release, Statement by Minister of Labour and Social Security on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Tyndall Award, 14 May 1971; press release, Statement by the Minister of Mines and Forests Mr Hubert Jack on RILA, 9 October 1971.

The PNC also stated that nationalization would result in significant changes to workers' lives. The party newspaper, *New Nation*, reported that Linden's residents would no longer be second-class citizens and workers would have a "meaningful say" in how the industry operated through systems of worker participation.<sup>90</sup> The PNC announced that worker and trade union representatives would be elected to GUYBAU's board, and workers would also have the opportunity to invest in the company through co-operatives.<sup>91</sup> In exchange for altering mineworkers' relationship to the means of production, the PNC made it clear that GUYBAU's workforce should become the "vanguard" of the revolution and act as paragons of self-reliance, self-discipline, and productivity.<sup>92</sup>

These potentially radical ideas relating to worker empowerment and participation co-existed with the more conservative elements of the PNC's vision for the Guyanese citizenry. Reflecting the "pedagogical" ethos of PNC elites, a series of government campaigns explained key terms associated with co-operative socialism.<sup>93</sup> PNC publications clarified the rationale underpinning the government's economic strategy and defined Guyanese citizenship in terms of participation in government-sponsored schemes linked to self-help and co-operative projects.<sup>94</sup> This attempt to inculcate a sense of civic duty through participation in parastatals was accompanied by the implementation of policies in state-run enterprises, which reinforced hierarchical roles for citizens along the axes of class, gender, race, and generation. Initial government interventions targeted sectors of the economy where Afro-Guyanese workers predominated – a strategy that reflected the racialized nature of Guyana's political economy, the PNC's resulting dependence on client trade unions, and its leadership's moralizing view of the Afro-Guyanese working classes.<sup>95</sup> What was particularly striking about these interventions was that, for all

<sup>90</sup>BL, "Bauxite Folk Pledge Support for Take-Over", *New Nation*, 28 February 1971, p. 1. For a more detailed exposition on the PNC's worker participation model in GUYBAU, see Jamaica National Library, W.H. Parris, *The Rationale Underlying Worker Participation and Some Implications For Its Forms* (Georgetown, 1973).

<sup>91</sup>TNA, FCO 63/729, PNC Statement, "Workers to Participate and Hold Share in GUYBAU", 16 July 1971.

<sup>92</sup>BL, "We Put Trust in Linden Workers", *New Nation*, 11 July 1971, p. 1; TNA, FCO 63/727, "Control of Our National Resources", Address to the Nation by L.F.S. Burnham on the Occasion of Republic Day, 23 February 1971.

<sup>93</sup>Kate Quinn, "Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Conflicts in Guyana", in Rosemarijn Hoefte, Matthew L. Bishop, and Peter Clegg (eds), *Postcolonial Trajectories in the Caribbean: The Three Guianas* (London, 2017), p. 21. On postcolonial pedagogy and its relationship to development, see Chakrabarty, "Legacies of Bandung", pp. 4812–4818.

<sup>94</sup>SHL, *A Primer for National Commitment* (Georgetown, 1974). Also cited in Quinn, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>95</sup>The pluralistic nature of Guyana's socio-economic structures, which emerged during the colonial period, can be overstated. Nonetheless, broadly speaking, Indo-Guyanese peoples tended to work in the sugar industry where they combined paid work on the plantations with subsistence rice farming. In contrast, Afro-Guyanese peoples combined employment in the sugar industry, either as seasonal cane cutters or skilled artisans employed in the plantation factories, with work in the bauxite mines, diamond and gold fields, and the urban sector, perhaps as market traders or waterfront workers. The racialized political economy of Guyana's labour market contributed to the development of trade unions and political parties, which represented the narrow sectional interests of either Afro-Guyanese or Indo-Guyanese workers. The emergence of PPP as a multiracial coalition in the early 1950s appeared to offer an alternative, but it split along racial lines later that decade. For a useful overview of these

the PNC's promises to advance women's economic opportunities and protect their rights through co-operative socialism, the government's oft-stated intention to make the "small man, a real man" was indicative of certain masculine assumptions regarding who the worker was.<sup>96</sup> These normative expectations were reflected in pay awards and employment benefits, such as those afforded to Afro-Guyanese waterfront workers in the early 1970s, which affirmed men's status as households' principal wage-earners, and ministerial statements that often contradicted official PNC policy on gender equality by defining women's roles in relation to unremunerated reproductive labour.<sup>97</sup>

Persistently high rates of unemployment and inadequate wages for those with formal employment meant that the PNC's emerging vision for the ideal Guyanese citizen was just that: a vision.<sup>98</sup> It was partly for this reason that the government introduced a national service programme in 1974.<sup>99</sup> Internal government correspondence reveals how officials understood the programme's relationship to the 1972 development plan and the party's intention of creating citizens through work.<sup>100</sup> The PNC anticipated that national service would enable the government to achieve its aim of "feeding, clothing and housing the nation" by transforming "individuals geared for dependency into self-reliant and productive nationals".<sup>101</sup> In accordance with the PNC's pedagogical approach, preparation for national service included five days of political training, which would then be followed by ten days of military training.<sup>102</sup> The training, which was framed in a speech by Burnham as "orientation", was designed to facilitate discussion among recruits, so they realized that their problems – low wages, unemployment, and crime – were caused by "imperialists" and their "local stooges"

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developments, see Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 336–356 and pp. 600–629.

<sup>96</sup>For PNC statements on gender equality and rights, see SHL, Forbes Burnham, *Towards the Socialist Revolution*, Address at the First Biennial Conference of the PNC at Sophia, Georgetown, 18 August 1975 (Ruimveldt, 1975), p. 23 and State Paper on Equality for Women, Presented to the National Assembly by the PM L.F.S Burnham on 15 January 1976, Sessional Paper No. 1/1976.

<sup>97</sup>BL, "Saboteurs at Work", *New Nation*, 2 May 1971, p. 9. On the limits of the PNC's gender equality agenda see Linda Peake, "The Development and Role of Women's Political Organization in Guyana", in Janet H. Momsen, *Women and Change in the Caribbean* (Kingston, 1993), pp. 112–113.

<sup>98</sup>A sociological profile of Guyana's bauxite workers, which was conducted in the late 1960s, documented high rates of circular migration amongst the workforce. UGL, Ivaar Oxaal, *Report of the DEMBA Panel of Consultants on Community Attitudes and Their Effect on Industrial Relations*, (n.p., 1967), pp. 59–76. See also: Michael Parris, "Delinquency in the Liden Area", *Guyana Journal of Sociology*, 1:1 (1975), pp. 1–18.

<sup>99</sup>The national service programme grew out of an earlier youth corps initiative. National service not compulsory, but the PNC sought to make it a prerequisite for certain educational attainments, including the completion of secondary education and entry to higher education. By the late 1970s, there were approximately 4,500 members in the national service programme, the majority of whom were Afro-Guyanese. Singh, *Guyana: Politics in a Plantation Society*, pp. 79–80.

<sup>100</sup>This rationale was common to many youth-orientated programmes implemented by postcolonial governments. See, for example, Thomas Burgess, "The Young Pioneers and the Rituals of Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar", *Africa Today*, 3:51 (2005), pp. 3–29.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 4–5; SHL, *A Primer for National Commitment* (Georgetown, 1976), p. 15. See also Kempe R. Hope, "Guyana's National Service Programme", *Journal of Administration Overseas*, 15:1 (1976), pp. 34–38.

<sup>102</sup>On the military structure of the national service programme and its various corps, see State Paper on National Service, pp. 8–11.

in the form of “black marketers, landlords, and landowners”.<sup>103</sup> Following the completion of their training, national service recruits would be dispatched to agricultural settlements in the interior, or set to work on other tasks linked to the 1972 development programme.

In theory, recruits would include young men and women drawn from different racial and class groups. In practice, the PNC appears to have prioritized the recruitment of young Afro-Guyanese men because they represented “prospective heads of families” and they were most at risk of becoming “limers” – a pejorative term for young Afro-Guyanese men who relied on petty crime and street “hustling” to survive, and frequently attracted comment in the local press during the 1970s.<sup>104</sup> There was no corresponding recruitment drive to enlist the women into the programme. PNC communications described women as “the basis of the Guyanese family”, who were central to the reproduction of the nation. Consequently, although it was accepted that women should not be discouraged from becoming members of the national service programme, it was emphasized that care should be taken to avoid any disruptions that would prevent women from becoming wives and mothers.<sup>105</sup> In other words, the national service programme reflected the moralizing belief of PNC officials that unemployed young Afro-Guyanese men constituted a threat to the government’s plans for realizing economic development through productive forms of work. Enlisting would-be limers into the national programme would remedy this situation, because the training would teach recruits the value of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and self-discipline through collective forms of labour. Such an undertaking, as one PNC publication put it, constituted “labour in the service of the nation”, which officials presumably believed would provide male recruits with a pathway to formal sector employment in a nationalized industry and thereby facilitate the formation of stable working-class family units in accordance with the government’s promise to make the “small man, a real man”.<sup>106</sup>

### The “Shock of the Global” and Its Local Consequences<sup>107</sup>

The inauguration of the PNC’s national service programme, with its class-based analysis of the postcolonial condition in Guyana, signalled the party’s turn towards a more doctrinaire form of socialism. Following Burnham’s 1974 Declaration of Sophia speech, PNC elites increasingly defined the party in terms of its socialist and vanguardist credentials.<sup>108</sup> At the same time, however, very few of the PNC’s policy

<sup>103</sup>Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York (SC), Julian Mayfield Papers, 4/3, Text of Speeches Made in the National Assembly by L.F.S Burnham; Julian Mayfield Papers, 4/1, “The Making of a Corpsman” (n.d.), p. 2.

<sup>104</sup>David J. Dodd and Michael Parris, *Socio-Cultural Aspects of Crime and Delinquency in Georgetown, Guyana* (Kingston, 1976), p. 27; “Perspective of Delinquency”, *Guyana Graphic*, 9 July 1970, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup>SC, Julian Mayfield Papers, 4/3, “Compulsory National Service Corps for Guyana”, pp. 4–5.

<sup>106</sup>*Idem*, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup>Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela Daniel J. Sargent (eds), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

<sup>108</sup>SHL, *Declaration of Sophia: Address by Forbes Burnham at a Special Congress to Mark the 10th Anniversary of the PNC in Government* (Georgetown, 1974).

initiatives functioned according to their intended aims or socialist principles. Critics of the government claimed that the PNC's national service programme functioned as a paramilitary organization that was comprised of party loyalists and ideologues.<sup>109</sup> This may have been true for its salaried members, namely, the officer corps recruited from the Guyana Defence Force, but PNC correspondence suggests many others were ambivalent about the ideological aims of the national service programme. An internal government survey indicated that few members of the public believed in the official rationale for the programme, whilst others objected to it altogether, except where "limers" were the principal target for recruitment.<sup>110</sup> This ambivalence was echoed in a 1978 newspaper report, which implicitly conceded that the architects of national service had failed to convince the public of the programme's value.<sup>111</sup> Many recruits appear to have shared this view. Urban residents were unaccustomed to the demands of hinterland living, very few had the agricultural skills required to make the programme's schemes successful, and the emphasis on military-style organization was antithetical to limers' conception of freedom, which stood in direct opposition to the disciplinary principles so valued by Burnham and other senior PNC figures.<sup>112</sup> The result was that recruits simply abandoned their posts and returned to Georgetown.<sup>113</sup> The development of the co-operative sector was also subject to various struggles. The 1973 "land rebellion" suggests the PNC's co-operative model had a potentially receptive audience among rural communities. However, although the number of co-operatives had expanded rapidly by the mid-1970s, most had been established in the private sector to benefit from tax concessions and privileged access to land. The outcome was that many co-operatives operated by employing waged labour or sub-dividing land, thus becoming a vehicle for individual private accumulation rather than collective production and redistribution.<sup>114</sup>

The incomplete nature of the PNC's co-operative socialist revolution was acknowledged by party figures. By 1976, the PNC had nationalized eighty per cent of the Guyanese economy, including not just the bauxite sector but the sugar industry too.<sup>115</sup> Burnham argued that this extensive programme of nationalization was part of a wider shift to a wholly socialist state, which would involve the establishment of a federation of state-run enterprises and community-led producer and consumer societies, all of which would operate according to co-operative

<sup>109</sup>Singh, *Guyana: Politics in a Plantation Society*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>110</sup>SC, Julian Mayfield Papers, 4/3, Victor Forsythe, Chief Information Officer, "Summary Report on a Pilot Survey of Public Opinion of and Attitude to the Proposed System of National Service in Guyana", p. 6.

<sup>111</sup>"The Role of Guyana's National Service Explained", *The Sunday Chronicle*, 23 July 1978, p. 4.

<sup>112</sup>See the sociological investigation conducted by Dodd and Parris for an extended discussion of the historical and contemporary socio-economic and cultural factors that shaped limers' worlds. Dodd and Parris, *Socio-Cultural Aspects of Crime and Delinquency in Georgetown*.

<sup>113</sup>Standing and Sukdeo, "Labour Migration and Development in Guyana", pp. 311–312.

<sup>114</sup>Clive Thomas, "Guyana: The Rise and Fall of Co-Operative Socialism", in Anthony Payne and Paul Sutton (eds), *Dependency Under Challenge: The Political Economy of the Commonwealth Caribbean* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 91–92; James A. Sackey, "Dependence, Underdevelopment, and Socialist-Orientated Transformation in Guyana", *Inter-American Affairs*, 33:1 (1979), pp. 40–41.

<sup>115</sup>Hintzen, *The Costs of Regime Survival*, pp. 159–163.

principles.<sup>116</sup> Burnham admitted that the creation of a co-operative socialist state in this form was a long-term objective and that Guyana was in a transitional stage, but the performance of the Guyanese economy following the first wave of nationalizations had given the PNC leadership cause for optimism.<sup>117</sup> Following the 1973 oil crisis, government revenues had benefited temporarily from increased export prices, which generated surplus foreign reserves and thus compensated for rising import costs.<sup>118</sup> From 1975 onwards, however, falling production levels in the bauxite and sugar sectors exposed Guyana to the consequences of the successive economic shocks that sent the global economy into recession in the latter part of the decade.<sup>119</sup> Data compiled by the IMF reveals the steep decline of the Guyanese economy. GDP dropped by an average of ten per cent per annum in the period 1977 to 1979 and foreign reserves were eroded to such an extent that there was just enough to cover two weeks' worth of imports by the end of 1980.<sup>120</sup>

Guyana's deepening economic crisis was compounded by a failure to correctly identify its causes. Starting in 1977–1978, the PNC entered into a series of short-term agreements with the IMF and the World Bank.<sup>121</sup> These agreements were premised on the assumption that the economic crisis was a temporary balance-of-payments deficit caused by a combination of adverse domestic conditions and unfavourable external trends linked to the global economy.<sup>122</sup> PNC and IMF–World Bank officials agreed to remedy the situation by limiting demand in the short-term, through restrictions on imports, and increasing domestic export production in the medium term.<sup>123</sup> However, the second oil price hike, which further raised import costs, revealed that the crisis was really “a crisis of production”.<sup>124</sup> Key economic sectors could not raise export volumes because underinvestment in infrastructure, shortages of skilled staff, and scarcities of fuel and spare parts had contributed to the degradation of equipment and chronic underproduction. This meant that Guyana's exports had begun to lose market share at a time when the PNC lacked the resources to reverse the decline.<sup>125</sup> The outcome was that the PNC was forced to enter into more extensive structural adjustment programmes.<sup>126</sup> The design of these programmes reflected the principles associated

<sup>116</sup>SHL, Forbes Burnham, *Economic Liberation through Socialism, Leaders' Address – 2nd Biennial Congress of the PNC*, 12–20 August 1977 (Georgetown, 1977), pp. 15–19.

<sup>117</sup>SHL, Burnham, *Towards the Socialist Revolution*, pp. 10–12.

<sup>118</sup>By 1975, Guyana had generated \$G 256 million in foreign reserves. Hintzen, *The Costs of Regime Survival*, p. 162.

<sup>119</sup>Giuliano Garavini, *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South, 1957–1986* (Oxford, 2012), ch. 6.

<sup>120</sup>IMF, *Guyana: Recent Economic Developments*, 2 July 1981, pp. 1, 45.

<sup>121</sup>Jane Harrigan, “Guyana”, in Paul Mosley, Jane Harrigan, and John Toye (eds), *Aid and Power: The World Bank and Policy Based Lending*, vol. 2. Case Studies (London, 1991), pp. 366–368.

<sup>122</sup>Clive Thomas, “Guyana: The IMF–World Bank Group and the General Crisis”, *Social and Economic Studies*, 31:4 (1982), p. 48.

<sup>123</sup>Harrigan, “Guyana”, pp. 366–367.

<sup>124</sup>Thomas, “Guyana: The IMF–World Bank Group”, p. 58.

<sup>125</sup>World Bank, *Guyana: From Economic Recovery to Sustained Growth*, 1993, Annex B, p. 91.

<sup>126</sup>This included a three-year IMF-sponsored Extended Fund Facility, which was agreed in 1980, and a World Bank Government Action Programme that came into force in 1982. Harrigan, “Guyana”, pp. 368, 379.

with the “conservative counter-revolution”, which challenged the collectivist ethos of the NIEO by attaching stricter conditions to World Bank and IMF support.<sup>127</sup> In the case of Guyana, the government’s agreements with the IMF and the World Bank required the PNC to limit the role of the state in favour of private enterprise, liberalize trade, devalue the currency, and realize public savings through increased taxation, wage restraint, and reduced public debt ratios, which meant further cuts to social services and subsidies on essential goods.<sup>128</sup>

By the early 1980s, the effects of IMF–World Bank conditionality on the Guyanese economy were so severe that PNC ministers were arguing that Guyana should go it alone without the support of the two Washington-based institutions.<sup>129</sup> Initially, however, the PNC had sought to accommodate IMF–World Bank demands without compromising on the principles of its co-operative socialism. In correspondence with the World Bank, Guyana’s minister of finance, Kenneth E. Hope, had affirmed the PNC’s commitment to both the “establishment of co-operative socialism” through its basic needs strategy and the structural economic reforms required by external donors.<sup>130</sup> The PNC’s attempt to reconcile the demands of IMF–World Bank conditionality with the government’s economic revolution contributed to the replacement of the 1972 plan with a new development programme (1978–1981).<sup>131</sup> The aims of the new strategy were to promote a rapid increase in exports, facilitate infrastructure development, and encourage public savings.<sup>132</sup> The return to short-term objectives linked to export-orientated growth did not signal the PNC’s wholesale abandonment of the ethos that had informed the 1972 plan.<sup>133</sup> Hope explained the new development programme with reference to the continued importance of empowerment, egalitarianism, and ending citizens’ alienation from the means of production. Hope argued that these objectives had been partially

<sup>127</sup>John Toye, and Richard Toye, “From New Era to Neo-Liberalism: US Strategy on Trade, Finance, and Development in the United Nations, 1964–82”, *Forum for Development Studies*, 32:1 (2005), pp. 151–180, quote at p. 176.

<sup>128</sup>These measures are listed in Thomas, “Guyana: The IMF–World Bank Group”, Appendix A.

<sup>129</sup>IMF Archives, (IMFA), ETRA Files, 92/47186, Horst Struckmeyer to Acting Managing Director, “Memorandum: Mission to Guyana”, 11 April 1979; and ETRA Files, 92/47187, T. Reichmann to Managing Director, “Guyana: Use of Fund Resources Negotiation (5–19 April 1983)”, 25 April 1983, p. 3.

<sup>130</sup>Annex A, Kenneth E. Hope, Minister of Finance, to Robert McNamara, 12 December 1980, World Bank, *Programme Performance Audit Report, Guyana – Structural Adjustment Loan and Credit*, Report No. 6119, 25 March 1986, pp. 32–47.

<sup>131</sup>Lesley Potter, “Guyana: Co-Operative Socialism, Planning and Reality”, in Dean Forbes and Nigel Thrift (eds), *The Socialist Third World: Urban Development and Territorial Planning* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 237–238.

<sup>132</sup>Third Parliament of Guyana Under the Constitution of Guyana, First Session 1973 to 1978, Budget Speech by F.E. Hope, Minister of Finance, 27 February 1978, Sessional Paper No. 1, 1978, esp. pp. 8–10; World Bank, *Economic Memorandum on Guyana*, Report Number 3486-GUY, 2 June 1981, pp. 10–13.

<sup>133</sup>It is worth noting that the revised strategy called for the increased participation of ordinary Guyanese through the creation of regional democratic councils, which would be tasked with implementing development projects, coordinating the distribution of foodstuffs, and local decision-making. According to Lesley Potter, this approach drew on equivalent policies that were being implemented in Cuba, thus signalling a shift away from the Tanzanian model, which had informed the 1972 plan, and underscoring the mutable character of the PNC’s development strategy. Potter, “Guyana: Co-Operative Socialism, Planning and Reality”, p. 242.

realized thanks to the PNC's nationalization programme, but short-term exigencies meant the new plan's ability to continue delivering the promises of co-operative socialism would be contingent upon higher productivity levels and efficiency savings.<sup>134</sup> In doing so, Hope and other PNC ministers, including his successor, Desmond Hoyte, shifted the responsibility onto Guyanese citizens, by arguing that low productivity and declining output were as much a result of poor attitudes to work as they were caused by issues linked to infrastructure problems or shortages of essential supplies.<sup>135</sup> The PNC instructed workers to rationalize the use of resources and eschew strike action. PNC ministers also renewed the link between citizenship and work by arguing that the delivery of socio-economic rights and material advancement depended upon increased productivity.<sup>136</sup>

Pro-PNC trade union leaders embraced the government's calls for increased productivity. In 1977, Stanton Critchlow, the general secretary of the PNC-affiliated Guyana Labour Union, which included Georgetown's waterfront workers among its members, called for an end to "absenteeism". Critchlow continued by arguing that workers should adopt a new "attitude to work" to realize the nation's collective goals of "greater production and productivity".<sup>137</sup> These sentiments were echoed by individual workers, who were publicly supportive of the PNC. At a PNC rally in 1977, a bauxite worker, Serjent Samuels, affirmed his commitment to the "socialist ideal" and stated his belief that the PNC was "capable of [...] liberating the people of Guyana from economic and social injustice".<sup>138</sup> Not every worker shared these beliefs, of course. In 1978, in spite of Critchlow's call for improved workplace discipline the previous year, the police announced that new measures would be implemented in Georgetown's port to safeguard cargo, which was being stolen by waterfront workers for sale on the black market.<sup>139</sup> Similar concerns were expressed by Jacob Braithwaite, the president of the GMWU, who informed the *Guyana Chronicle* that the union intended to run an educational programme to teach its members what it meant "to work in a state-owned industry", and thereby combat high rates of absenteeism and theft.<sup>140</sup> Other signs of indifference or perhaps even outright opposition to the PNC, given the government's insistence on active and engaged forms of citizenship, included workers' attitude towards May Day. Under the PNC, May Day typically involved co-ordinated rallies and demonstrations by pro-government unions. Linden's 1978 May Day rally, however, was poorly

<sup>134</sup>Hope, Budget Speech 1978, p. 6.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*; Third Parliament of Guyana Under the Constitution of Guyana, First Session 1973 to 1978, Budget Speech by Desmond Hoyte, Minister of Economic Development and Co-Operatives, Sessional Paper No. 1, 12 March 1979, pp. 24–25.

<sup>136</sup>Budget Speech, 1979, pp. 27–28; Fourth Parliament of Guyana Under the Constitution of Guyana, First Session 1982, Budget Speech by Desmond Hoyte, Vice President Economic Planning and Finance, 29 March 1982, p. 26.

<sup>137</sup>"Union Leaders Reaffirm Pledge to Produce More", *Guyana Chronicle*, 26 August 1977, p. 20.

<sup>138</sup>BL, "Guyana's Workers Pledge to Produce More", *Guyana Chronicle*, 20 August 1977, p. 16.

<sup>139</sup>BL, "Chamber to Visit Docks", *Guyana Chronicle*, 26 August 1977, p. 5; BL, "New Police Moves to Protect Cargo on Waterfront", *Daily Chronicle*, 19 May 1978, p. 8.

<sup>140</sup>BL, "Union Call on Bauxite Workers to Protect Company Property", *Guyana Chronicle*, 12 August 1977, p. 3.

attended, which led Braithwaite to condemn GMWU members and the wider community for their apparent apathy.<sup>141</sup>

The indifference of many GMWU members can be attributed to the deteriorating state of the bauxite industry. Grievances relating to arbitrary forms of discipline and dissatisfaction with the PNC over a wage settlement had contributed to strikes by rank-and-file bauxite workers in 1975 and 1976, respectively.<sup>142</sup> The situation in the industry continued to deteriorate as Guyana's economic crisis worsened. Following the nationalization of DEMBA, the PNC had claimed that worker participation in nationalized industries was equivalent to worker control since state-ownership in the co-operative republic amounted to the social ownership of the means of production.<sup>143</sup> Contrary to these claims, however, a 1979 recording of a conversation between Burnham and members of GUYMINE's heavy earth department suggests that systems of worker participation in the bauxite sector were dysfunctional and party elites were indifferent to workers' plight.<sup>144</sup> During the course of the conversation, it was revealed that meetings were held irregularly, if at all; workers were treated poorly; and Burnham, for all his talk of making "the small man, a real man", responded to employees' criticisms by retorting that "Linden ain't the whole of Guyana" when they told him he had overstayed his welcome.<sup>145</sup> This growing sense of alienation among bauxite workers was exacerbated by a range of other issues, including insecure employment, growing food shortages, and problems related to the delivery of social services and healthcare.<sup>146</sup>

Senior PNC figures and their trade union allies attributed industry problems to bauxite workers' ill-discipline and the influence of malcontents.<sup>147</sup> However, contrary to these claims, mineworkers were not opposed to hard work, nor were they intent on destabilizing the industry. The Organization of Working People (OWP), which had emerged as a successor to the Committee of Ten, made this clear. From the mid-1970s onwards, the OWP issued a series of statements that were highly critical of the PNC.<sup>148</sup> The OWP condemned corruption and mismanagement in the bauxite industry following nationalization, which it claimed

<sup>141</sup>BL, "Very Poor Turnout at Linden May Day Rally", *Guyana Chronicle*, 3 May 1978, p. 8.

<sup>142</sup>Strikes had continued to affect the bauxite industry following nationalization. In 1974, the bauxite industry lost 34,348 man-days to strike action, most of which were caused by disputes connected to disciplinary issues. On these protests and the 1975 strike, which was the third strike in a month. See: TNA, FCO 13/2724, D. Emsley, British High Commission, Georgetown, to H.R.G. Hurst, Deputy Overseas Labour Adviser, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 23 June 1975 and "PNC versus the People", *Day Clean*, June 1975, enclosed in *Ibid*.

<sup>143</sup>SHL, Burnham, *Economic Liberation through Socialism*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>144</sup>GUYMINE was established in 1977 following GUYBAU's merger with Guyana's other state mining company, BERMINE. BERMINE had been established in 1975 when the PNC nationalized Reynolds Metals' bauxite operations in Guyana.

<sup>145</sup>SHL, *Dialogue No. 1 – The Prime Minister Speaks with Workers of the Guymine's Heavy Earth-Moving Equipment Department at Linden, 21 September 1979* (Georgetown, 1979), quote at p. 23.

<sup>146</sup>TNA, LAB 13/2776, J.F. Jenkins, British High Commission, Port of Spain, to H.R.G. Hurst, Overseas Labour Adviser, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 28 July 1977.

<sup>147</sup>TNA, FCO 13/2724, "Verbeke Had a Straight Talk", *Guyana Graphic*, 19 June 1975, enclosed in D. Emsley, Deputy Overseas Labour Adviser, to H.R.G. Hurst, 23 June 1975.

<sup>148</sup>On the OWP and its earlier links to ASCRIA, see Sara Abraham, *Labour and the Multiracial Project in the Caribbean: Its History and Its Promise* (Lanham, MD, 2007), p. 115.

had led to the emergence of a new “class of Canadians”. The OWP also stated that workers had become “wage-slaves” in a “neo-colonial context” where they were told to “eat less, sleep less, [and] work hard” whilst the managerial class grew “fat and rich”.<sup>149</sup>

The OWP’s criticisms were justified. The PNC contained competent and professional individuals, who were either committed to the ideals of co-operative socialism because they corresponded with their own worldview, or because they had a sense of patriotic duty to deliver an independence dividend to the Guyanese people.<sup>150</sup> There were those within the PNC, however, who exploited the party’s control of the state for personal advancement and private gain. The exponential growth of the public sector following the establishment of the co-operative republic had enabled the PNC to dispense patronage to its principal supporters among the Afro-Guyanese middle- and working-classes. Prior to the onset of the economic crisis in the late 1970s, this took the form of jobs in the civil service and state-run corporations that gave PNC supporters privileged access to higher salaries, imported consumables, and other work-related benefits.<sup>151</sup> In the bauxite sector, for example, the PNC concluded agreements that stipulated only GMWU members were eligible to receive dividends from the industry’s profit-sharing arrangements and other fringe benefits that GUYMINE employees were entitled to.<sup>152</sup> The political considerations that governed the distribution of resources were accompanied by more explicitly corrupt practices in a system where the principle of “party paramountcy” meant there was little or no oversight over public spending.<sup>153</sup> This led commentators to draw a connection between PNC predation, deepening socio-economic insecurity, and a wider breakdown in law and order.<sup>154</sup> This was particularly apparent in impoverished urban settings such as Linden, where unemployment, rising inflation, and shortages of basic goods gave rise to intra-class conflicts in the form of crime and struggles to access renumerated employment. The result was that the unemployed were transformed into “citizen-beggars”, who sought out meagre resources dispensed by PNC functionaries in exchange for pledging their loyalty to the regime.<sup>155</sup>

The OWP’s response to this state of affairs was to call on bauxite workers to operate collectively, reject corrupt practices, and put aside their individual concerns in favour

<sup>149</sup>LMA, Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA/4463/B/13/04/003, “OWP, 1st Anniversary”, *Dayclean*, 2 February 1975.

<sup>150</sup>Both Moe Taylor and Kimberly Nettles recorded interviews with former PNC representatives and supporters, who affirmed the view that they supported the PNC’s socialist agenda, at least initially, because it captured the revolutionary spirit of the age. Taylor, “Walter Rodney, Forbes Burnham”, p. 204, and Kimberly Nettles, “Becoming Red Thread Women: Alternative Visions of Gendered Politics in Post-independence Guyana”, *Social Movement Studies*, 6:1 (2007), pp. 63–64.

<sup>151</sup>Rajendra Chandisingh, “The State, the Economy, and Type of Rule in Guyana: An Assessment of Guyana’s ‘Socialist Revolution’”, *Latin American Perspectives*, 10:4 (1983), pp. 59–74, esp. pp. 61 and 67.

<sup>152</sup>BL, “Payout to Linden Workers Starts Tomorrow”, *Guyana Chronicle*, 20 July 1978, p. 1; BL, “Bauxite Workers to Get Furniture Loan”, *Guyana Chronicle*, 29 July 1978, p. 16.

<sup>153</sup>Rose, *Dependency and Socialism*, p. 195.

<sup>154</sup>*Sunday Graphic*, 12 November 1972, p. 5, cited in Thomas J. Spinner Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945–1983* (Boulder, CO, 1984), pp. 141–142; Parris, “Delinquency”, pp. 1–18.

<sup>155</sup>Parris, “Delinquency”, pp. 1–18.

of their shared class interests by working productively, if not for the PNC, then for the Guyanese working-classes and wider nation.<sup>156</sup> The OWP's collectivist agenda, which condemned exploitation and enduring forms of neocolonial subjugation, spoke to a specific conception of freedom that was rooted in the experiences of colonial and postcolonial unfreedom.<sup>157</sup> Historically, elements of the Afro-Guyanese working classes had rejected liberal understandings of freedom, which the colonial authorities had claimed could be realized through individuated waged work. Instead, since waged work was associated with drudgery and racialized hierarchy, many Afro-Guyanese peoples had sought to pursue a combination of economic activities that enabled them to retain at least partial access to the means of production, did not necessarily entail a distinction between personal and collective freedoms, and often prioritized communal goals over individual concerns.<sup>158</sup> By invoking this collectivist past, through references to the experience of colonial exploitation and the importance of empowering workers through meaningful systems of worker control, the OWP was drawing inspiration from historic struggles for freedom, albeit in ways that spoke to the postcolonial present.<sup>159</sup> In other words, the OWP's critique of the PNC was designed to resonate with workers' anger at the government's failure to deliver the promises of independence, particularly in terms of its pledges to create a more equal society and transform labour's relationship to the means of production.

### Enter the Working People's Alliance

Events in Guyana were being repeated across the Third World at the turn of the 1980s. In the decades following independence, Third World states had sought legitimacy through their anti-imperialist positions, ideas of popular participation and accountability, and, above all else, the promise that sovereignty had a "material" component which would deliver prosperity for the citizenry.<sup>160</sup> The imposition of structural adjustment programmes threatened this social contract in many contexts where widening inequalities and the indulgences of new bourgeoisies generated various forms of popular anger directed against postcolonial regimes.<sup>161</sup> In Guyana,

<sup>156</sup>LMA, Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA/4463/B/13/04/001, "OWP Points Out New Way", *Dayclean*, 1:20, May 1975, p. 1.

<sup>157</sup>This was by no means a universally accepted understanding of freedom amongst the Afro-Guyanese working classes, as the case of the limers' rejection of waged work in favour of street hustling and intra-class predation suggests. Of course, limers' criminal activities were as much about unfortunate circumstances and limited opportunities in a context where their ostentatious displays of bravado constituted a form of "social outlawry" – as Obika Gray has argued for Jamaica's *rude bwoys* for this period. Obika Gray, *Demeaned but Empowered: The Social Power of the Urban Poor in Jamaica* (Kingston, 2004).

<sup>158</sup>On collectivism and mutuality among mineworkers and their fellow Afro-Guyanese, see Barbara Josiah, *Migration, Mining, and the African Diaspora: Guyana in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries* (Basingstoke, 2011), chs 8 and 9. The classic statement on collective understandings of freedom in the post-emancipation Caribbean is O. Nigel Bolland's *Struggles for Freedom: Essays On Colonialism and Culture in the Caribbean and Central* (Kingston, 1997).

<sup>159</sup>SHL, *The PNC Versus the Bauxite Workers* (Linden, 1977), p. 21.

<sup>160</sup>Leyla Dakhli and Vincent Bonnescase, "Introduction: Interpreting the Global Economy through Local Anger", *International Review of Social History*, 66:SI29 (2021), p. 12.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*

the PPP had announced a policy of “critical support” for the PNC following the government’s formal adoption of socialism in 1974.<sup>162</sup> The truce proved short-lived, however.<sup>163</sup> The late 1970s witnessed an upsurge in labour-related protests, including a 135-day strike by the pro-PPP Guyana Agricultural Workers’ Union (GAWU), which paralysed the sugar industry in 1977.<sup>164</sup> The 15,000-strong GAWU instigated the strike in retaliation for the PNC’s failure to adhere to the union’s interpretation of a profit-sharing agreement, which stipulated that a proportion of the industry’s revenues should be redistributed amongst the workforce.<sup>165</sup> Significantly, and notwithstanding the PNC’s attempts to stoke racial animosities by recruiting Afro-Guyanese strike breakers, the GAWU received moral and material support from sympathetic organizations.<sup>166</sup> This included independent trade unions with Afro-Guyanese memberships, such as the National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NAACIE), which struck for two weeks in support of the GAWU, and the OWP whose members collected and distributed strike relief for Indo-Guyanese workers.<sup>167</sup> The growing industrial unrest culminated in the “civil rebellion” of mid-to-late 1979, when a multiracial cross-section of Guyanese society participated in a series of marches, rallies, and strikes.<sup>168</sup> Inspired by the overthrow of regimes in Iran and Grenada and angered by deteriorating economic conditions at home, the Guyanese people took to the streets where they shouted slogans such as “Shah Gone! Gairy Gone! Who Next?”.<sup>169</sup>

The PNC’s increasing authoritarianism was another key driver of the protests associated with the civil rebellion. In 1978, a fraudulent public referendum resulted in the abrogation of constitutional protections and the drafting of a new constitution which enhanced Burnham’s executive powers and consolidated the PNC’s control over the legislature.<sup>170</sup> The late 1970s also witnessed the violent suppression of anti-government demonstrations and politically motivated assassinations.<sup>171</sup> Much of this violence was enacted by PNC loyalists in the security forces and party auxiliaries connected to the House of Israel – a religious cult that recruited the “lumpen”

<sup>162</sup>Taylor, “Walter Rodney, Forbes Burnham”, pp. 200–201.

<sup>163</sup>It is important to note that, unlike other opposition groups and parties, the PPP did not call for the overthrow of the PNC because of Burnham’s professed commitment to socialism. A corollary of this stance was that the PPP would not countenance working with non-left-wing groups in Guyana, because this ran counter to its commitment to anti-imperialism. The result was that the PPP oscillated between critiquing the PNC’s socialist shortcomings and organizing more direct forms of opposition through its principal union, the GAWU. On the PPP’s reluctance to work with other groups during the Civil Rebellion, see Hinds, “Walter Rodney and Political Resistance”, pp. 57–58.

<sup>164</sup>Abraham, *Labour and the Multiracial Project*, pp. 120–121.

<sup>165</sup>Spinner Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana*, pp. 162–164.

<sup>166</sup>UW-M, Labadie Collection, “Volunteers to the Rescue”, *New Nation*, 4 September 1977, p. 2.

<sup>167</sup>The NAACIE’s members included Afro-Guyanese skilled factory workers employed in the sugar industry. Abraham, *Labour and the Multiracial Project*, p. 116.

<sup>168</sup>These protests included sympathy strikes coordinated by a multiracial and inter-class coalition of four unions, the GAWU, the NAACIE, the Clerical and Commercial Workers’ Union, and the University of Guyana Workers’ Union, in support of striking bauxite workers. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>169</sup>For a thorough account of the Civil Rebellion see David Hinds, “Walter Rodney and Political Resistance in Guyana: The 1979–1980 Civil Rebellion”, *Wadabagei*, 11:1 (2008), pp. 36–63.

<sup>170</sup>Spinner Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana*, pp. 164–168.

<sup>171</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 174–177.

elements of the Afro-Guyanese population in exchange for meagre public goods in the form of dilapidated accommodation and basic food staples.<sup>172</sup> This shift to violent authoritarianism, which occurred against the backdrop of the Jonestown tragedy and further fraudulent elections in 1980, co-existed uneasily with PNC rhetoric regarding popular participation and respect for civil liberties.<sup>173</sup> The new constitution contained many articles that referenced the importance of protecting individual rights for specific categories of citizen through civic organizations such as trade unions.<sup>174</sup> The duties of Guyanese citizens were also set out in the constitution. Specifically, the constitution gave legal form to the PNC's discourse on the relationship between work, development, and citizenship. This included the constitutional right to work in exchange for the corresponding duty to work, as well as further articles stipulating it was the "duty of the people through sustained and disciplined endeavours to achieve the highest possible levels of production".<sup>175</sup>

The architects of the constitution may have presented rights and duties as complementary, but the PNC invariably prioritized collective needs and obligations at the expense of constitutional protections.<sup>176</sup> Since the regime defined itself in vanguardist terms, PNC elites regarded the interests of the party, state, and nation as coterminous with the will of the people.<sup>177</sup> As such, there were no contradictions to resolve when it came to the relationship between the protection of individual constitutional rights and the collective imperatives of the PNC's socialist state-building project. The constitution asserted, for example, that the socialist structure of the economy and socialist labour laws would enhance workers' protections and material status. However, in spite of these constitutional responsibilities, the PNC refused to deliver statutory obligations relating to profit-sharing or minimum wages by citing the deepening economic crisis.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, when workers struck in protest, as sugar and

<sup>172</sup>For two contemporary accounts on the House of Israel: "Expose: Inside A Rabbi's Kingdom", *Caribbean Contact*, June 1982, pp. 8–9; UW-M, Labadie Collection, "The Days of Elijah", *Open Word*, No. 228, 28 July 1986.

<sup>173</sup>On the 1980 elections, see Spinner Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana*, pp. 191–194. For a nuanced reading of the Jonestown murder-suicide and the settlement's relationship to Guyana's co-operative socialist project, see Russell Rickford, "These People Are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out 'Moonies': Jonestown and African American Expatriation in the 1970s", in Brandon R. Byrd, Leslie M. Alexander, and Russell Rickford (eds), *Reimagining Black Intellectual History* (Evanston, IL, 2022), pp. 151–166.

<sup>174</sup>Guyana, Bill No. 2 of 1980 Constitution of the Co-Operative Republic of 1980, chs 2 and 3. Available at: <https://www.parliament.gov.gy/chamber-business/bill-status/constitution-of-the-co-operative-republic-of-guyana-act-1980>; last accessed 18 November 2022.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 24, 26.

<sup>176</sup>SHL, Mohammed Shababbadeen, *The Guyana Constitution: Philosophy and Mechanics*, Paper Presented at the PNC's Third Biennial Congress, 22–26 August 1979 (Ruimvelt, 1979).

<sup>177</sup>SHL, *The Party in Its Role as the Vanguard*. Paper Prepared for 4th Biennial PNC Congress, 22–29 August 1981, National Exhibition Park, Sophia, 1981.

<sup>178</sup>In 1977, the PNC and TUC reached an agreement that set annual increases to the basic minimum wage, which were scheduled to be implemented over a three-year period (1977–1979), rising to G\$ 14 per day by 1979. The agreement also stipulated that further negotiations on productivity bonuses would take place. However, in 1978, GUYMINE, following the precedent set in the sugar industry the year previous, interpreted its obligations with regard to profit sharing in narrow terms, by citing the need for economic prudence. Similarly, in 1979, the PNC delayed the scheduled wage increase in the public sector for the same reason. The PNC continued to argue against wage rises in subsequent years, by claiming workers'

bauxite workers had done in 1977 and 1979 respectively, the PNC accused strikers of engaging in politically motivated protests.<sup>179</sup> Hoyte issued similar warnings in 1982 when he used his budget speech to caution trade unions about the potential implications of resorting to “political” strike action, even as he emphasized the constitutional right of workers to withdraw their labour.<sup>180</sup>

The PNC’s willingness to curtail freedoms and protections in the name of the socialist revolution became a focal point for civil society activists, many of whom drew on the principles and language associated with the human rights “breakthrough” of the 1970s to critique the authoritarianism of Burnham’s government.<sup>181</sup> It was no coincidence that the Guyana Human Rights Association, which aimed to hold the government accountable for its statutory responsibilities, was established in 1979 in response to the PNC’s abolition of constitutional protections.<sup>182</sup> Other opposition groups wanted to effect more radical change, however. At the centre of the growing anti-PNC movement was the Working People’s Alliance (WPA).<sup>183</sup> Established in 1974 as a multiracial collective, the WPA styled itself as a pressure group before becoming a political party in July 1979, when it was involved in coordinating the civil rebellion.<sup>184</sup> Key WPA figures included Eusi Kwayana, Clive Thomas, Rupert Roopnarine, Andaiye, and Walter Rodney, the academic-activist, who had returned to Guyana from Tanzania in 1974 and whose writings on race, class, imperialism, and neocolonialism were hugely influential among like-minded intellectuals and activists.<sup>185</sup>

The WPA was among a number of independent Marxist and Marxist–Leninist groups to emerge across the Caribbean during the 1970s.<sup>186</sup> In many ways, however,

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had failed to increase productivity. On these points, see, respectively, BL, “Government, TUC Sign New Wages Pact”, *Guyana Chronicle*, 24 August 1977, p. 1; BL, “Guymine Explains Position on Profit-Sharing”, *Guyana Chronicle*, 23 May 1978, p. 9; UW-M, Labadie Collection, “Workers to Benefit from Incentive Schemes”, *New Nation*, 23 December 1979, p. 1; Hoyte Budget Speech 1979, pp. 34–39.

<sup>179</sup>UW-M, Labadie Collection, “Sugar Belt Political Strike”, *New Nation*, 4 September 1977, p. 16. More generally on this accusation, see Clive Thomas, “The Current Crisis in Guyana”, *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 12:1 (1982), pp. 111–112.

<sup>180</sup>Fourth Parliament of Guyana Under the Constitution of Guyana, First Session, 1982 Budget Speech by Desmond Hoyte, Vice President, Economic Planning and Finance, 29 March 1982, p. 26.

<sup>181</sup>Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013).

<sup>182</sup>SHL, *Guyana Human Rights Report, July 1981 to August 1982* (Georgetown, 1982), p. 3. On the history of the GHRA, see Bertrand Ramcharan, “The Guyana Human Rights Association and the Struggle for Human Justice in Guyana”, in Bertrand Ramcharan *et al.* (eds), *The Protection Roles of Human Rights NGOs* (Leiden, 2022), pp. 283–296.

<sup>183</sup>On the formation of the WPA, see Nigel Westmaas, “Resisting Orthodoxy: Notes on the Origins and Ideology of the Working People’s Alliance”, *Small Axe*, 15 (2004), pp. 63–81, esp. 67–70.

<sup>184</sup>LMA, Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA/4463/B/13/04/003, “WPA to Become a Major Party”, *Dayclean Special*, 3:8 (1979).

<sup>185</sup>Two excellent examinations of Rodney’s intellectual thought and its influence on his political praxis, include: Rupert Lewis, *Walter Rodney’s Intellectual and Political Thought* (Barbados, 1998); and Anthony Bogues, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (New York, 2003), ch. 5.

<sup>186</sup>On the emergence of different iterations of the “radical” and “revolutionary” Caribbean left during the 1970s, see Perry Mars, *Ideology and Change: The Transformation of the Caribbean Left* (Detroit, MI, 1998), pp. 55–60.

the WPA was distinct from its regional counterparts.<sup>187</sup> Initially reflecting Rodney's concept of "groundings", the WPA rejected top-down strategies for mobilization in favour of revolutionary struggles led by the working people.<sup>188</sup> The emphasis on popular mobilization explains why Rodney and other leading members of the WPA toured towns and villages associated with bauxite and sugar production.<sup>189</sup> In these communities, WPA representatives listened to peoples' grievances, learnt from their experiences of collective survival and struggle, and co-ordinated deliberative sessions on history and political economy.<sup>190</sup> It was out of these meetings that rank-and-file workers – often those who had been retrenched by the PNC – emerged to co-ordinate the protests associated with the civil rebellion.<sup>191</sup> This strategy for mobilizing Guyanese citizens constituted an explicit rejection of the methods associated with the independence-era political parties, which the WPA accused of being overly concerned with elections and constitutional advancement at the expense of effecting radical change through the people. The WPA extended this critique to the socialist regimes that came to power throughout the Caribbean during the 1970s. Drawing on the thinking of Third World revolutionaries, including Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, and Rodney's own work on the implications of "false decolonization", the WPA was highly critical of second-generation postcolonial regimes that preached socialism but enabled the continued survival of peripheral capitalism.<sup>192</sup> In the case of Guyana specifically, the WPA condemned Burnham's "pseudo-socialism", which had empowered the

<sup>187</sup>For analyses that emphasize the uniqueness of the WPA at this time, see David Hinds, "The Grenada Revolution and the Caribbean Left: The Case of the Guyana Working People's Alliance", in Wendy C. Grenade (ed.), *The Grenada Revolution: Reflections and Lessons* (Jackson, MI, 2015), pp. 213–240; and Zeilig, *A Revolutionary for Our Time*, chs 10 and 13.

<sup>188</sup>This was by no means a universally accepted position within the WPA. According to Westmaas, the WPA's inclusive approach to membership was, in part, forced upon the organization during the Civil Rebellion when people flocked to join. This contributed to tensions, which are evident in draft publications released not long after the WPA announced it was becoming a political party. These publications sought to accommodate the WPA's willingness to work with like-minded groups and bottom-up mobilization with an emphasis on party discipline in accordance with the principles of Marxist–Leninism and democratic centralism. In these publications, the WPA set out clear instructions for party cells, referred to as "nuclei", which emphasized their subordination to the objectives of the party. These tensions remained a feature of internal WPA debates and discussions for the remainder of the early 1980s. On these points, see, respectively, WPA, Westmaas, "Resisting Orthodoxy", p. 75; Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, p. 240; and LMA Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA 4463/B/13/03/001, *Draft Constitution of the Working People's Alliance Party of the Guyanese Working Class* (October 1979).

<sup>189</sup>Rodney was not the sole architect of the WPA's political programme. Clive Thomas and Eusi Kwayana were also foundational to the WPA's political programme, as was Andaiye, who joined the WPA from the Movement Against Oppression, a grassroots opposition organization that was based in Georgetown and played an increasingly important role. Westmaas, *Op. Cit.* pp. 64, 70. On Andaiye see David Scott, "Counting Women's Caring Work: An Interview with Andaiye", *Small Axe*, 8:1 (2004), pp. 123–217. On Rodney's concept of "groundings", see his seminal collection of essays, which *Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications* originally published in 1969: *The Groundings with my Brothers* (London, 2019).

<sup>190</sup>Westmaas, "1968 and the Social and Political Foundations", pp. 117–118.

<sup>191</sup>Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, pp. 236–237.

<sup>192</sup>Paget Henry, "C.L.R. James, Walter Rodney and the Rebuilding of Caribbean Socialism", *The CLR James Journal*, 1–2:19 (2013), pp. 458–484.

PNC and enriched its elites to the disenfranchisement and impoverishment of the Guyanese people.<sup>193</sup>

The WPA's criticism of the first-generation nationalist parties and later post-independence governments created a number of intellectual challenges once it transitioned from a pressure group to a political party. After all, the WPA had rejected the electoral politics associated with the PPP and PNC, it had assisted with the coordination of the civil rebellion to overthrow the PNC, and it had boycotted the 1980 elections citing PNC's manipulation of the vote.<sup>194</sup> However, although internal documents suggest the party's attitude towards elections was a source of debate, the WPA would not countenance the curtailment of rights.<sup>195</sup> This was in contrast to other radical left-wing opposition groups in the Caribbean, for whom rights-based issues were subordinate to the revolutionary struggle.<sup>196</sup> The principal supporter of the WPA's rights-based advocacy was Clive Thomas, who argued that the "historical task of socialism in Guyana is to build on the workers' gains, not to reverse them".<sup>197</sup> For Thomas and other senior WPA figures, democratic rights and civil liberties were "peoples' rights" rather than "bourgeois rights".<sup>198</sup> Consequently, the WPA aimed to restore the rule of law, enhance working peoples' rights, and reimagine state structures and democratic processes that would devolve power to citizens and away from PNC elites. It was also for these reasons that the WPA operated as a leaderless organization with the objective of creating non-hierarchical institutions and systems of governance.<sup>199</sup> The clearest articulation of this ambition can be found in the WPA's 1979 *Toward A Revolutionary Socialist Guyana*. This programme stated that the WPA's objective was to create Workers' Assemblies led by a National Patriotic Front in a Peoples' Democratic State, where the executive offices of government would be replaced by collective leadership and headed by a rotating chairperson.<sup>200</sup>

The WPA's class analysis was also central to its vision for a post-PNC Guyana. For the WPA, the objective was to highlight the shared experience of exploitation and forge a multiracial revolutionary movement that embraced the working people and the progressive elements of the middle classes. In one of its founding statements, the WPA made it clear that the movement would be a cross-class alliance comprised of "workers, employees, farmers, landless peasants, the unemployed, housewives,

<sup>193</sup>The WPA's critique of "pseudo-socialism", which was a term used originally by Cheddi Jagan, was part of Rodney's wider analysis of the postcolonial condition in the Caribbean. See: Walter Rodney "Contemporary Political Trends in the English-speaking Caribbean", *The Black Scholar*, 7:1 (1975), pp. 15–21, and SHL, Eusi Kwayana, *Some Aspects of Pseudo-Socialism in Guyana* (n.p., 1976).

<sup>194</sup>LMA, Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA/4463/B/13/04/005, "Why We Must Boycott and Resist", *Dayclean*, 5–6 December, 5:10 (1980).

<sup>195</sup>Walter Rodney Papers, Archives Research Center, Atlanta University Center, Box 1, Folder 36, "Draft WPA on the Question of Elections".

<sup>196</sup>Mars, *Ideology and Change*, ch. 5.

<sup>197</sup>Thomas, "The Current Crisis in Guyana", pp. 121–122, quote at p. 121.

<sup>198</sup>Hinds, "The Grenada Revolution and the Caribbean Left", p. 218.

<sup>199</sup>In keeping with its non-doctrinaire ethos, the WPA did not rule out the possibility of joining a temporary coalition government of national unity in the event of Burnham's deposition. Walter Rodney, "People's Power, No Dictator", *Latin American Perspectives*, 8:1 (1981), p. 78.

<sup>200</sup>SHL, *Toward a Revolutionary Socialist Guyana*, pp. 15–16.

students, progressive professionals, small traders, craftsmen and self-employed toilers".<sup>201</sup> The emphasis on the collective experience of class exploitation did not mean race was dismissed as a form of false consciousness, not least because one of Rodney's greatest contributions had been to bring race into dialogue with class as part of his analysis of racialized class subjugation in imperial and neo-colonial contexts.<sup>202</sup> Applied to the Guyanese context, the WPA argued that racial divisions and animosities involving the Afro- and Indo-Guyanese populations were a symptom of unequal capitalist development and racialized class exploitation by the colonial authorities and their postcolonial successors in the form of the PNC. To remedy such inequities, the WPA identified labour's control over the means of production, the right to dignified work in both its productive and reproductive forms, and freedom from exploitation as central to the creation of more egalitarian forms of citizenship.<sup>203</sup>

During a period when Guyanese citizens had been primed to understand the relationship between work, rights, and freedom in collective terms, the WPA's alternate imagining of state socialism drew thousands of people onto the streets as part of the civil rebellion. This popularity was also the WPA's potential weakness. The development of a broad-based opposition movement centred on the WPA made its leadership a target for the state security forces. The resulting campaign of state terror reached its nadir with the assassination of Walter Rodney, whose death in June 1980 signalled the end of the civil rebellion.<sup>204</sup> In the wake of Rodney's death, the WPA continued its efforts to organize demonstrations and other forms of civil disobedience.<sup>205</sup> However, although thousands attended Rodney's funeral, the frequency and intensity of anti-government demonstrations subsided, as the opposition became increasingly fearful about the consequences of challenging PNC rule.<sup>206</sup> It took the near total collapse of the Guyanese economy in 1982 for the protests to resume.<sup>207</sup> This period witnessed a dramatic rise in unemployment, the cessation of basic public services, and severe food shortages, as the PNC restricted essential imports as part of its attempts to accommodate IMF–World Bank demands for public savings with its own policies of self-sufficiency and import substitution.<sup>208</sup>

## The Food Rebellion

Growing public anger at this state of affairs contributed to a series of strikes and anti-PNC demonstrations.<sup>209</sup> In 1982, there were 653 recorded work stoppages

<sup>201</sup>SHL, "Working People's Alliance is Formed", 30 November 1974, in *The Crisis and the Working People* (Georgetown, 1977), pp. 25–27, quote at p. 26.

<sup>202</sup>See, for example, Walter Rodney's posthumous *A History of the Guyanese Working People* (Baltimore, MD, 1981).

<sup>203</sup>SHL, *Toward a Revolutionary Socialist Guyana*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>204</sup>Zeilig, *A Revolutionary for Our Time*, pp. 311–318.

<sup>205</sup>LMA, Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA/4463/B/13/04/005, "Why We Must Boycott and Resist", *Dayclean*, 5:10 (1980), p. 1; "Advance the Battle", *Dayclean*, 5:13 (1981), p. 1.

<sup>206</sup>Westmaas, "Resisting Orthodoxy", p. 75.

<sup>207</sup>On the social impact of the economic collapse, see SHL, *Guyana Human Rights Report 1981–1982*.

<sup>208</sup>IMFA, Guyana – Staff Report for the Article IV Consultation, Prepared by Western Hemisphere Department, SM/83/205, 13 October 1983, p. 16.

<sup>209</sup>Abraham, *Labour and the Multiracial Project in the Caribbean*, pp. 127–128.

caused by a combination of factors, including demands for higher wages and grievances relating to retrenchment and victimization.<sup>210</sup> These work-related protests included several strikes in the bauxite industry where the pro-PNC leadership of the GMWU and its sister union, the Guyana Bauxite Supervisors' Association, had been replaced by anti-government figures.<sup>211</sup> The renewed wave of industrial unrest intersected with the "food rebellion" of 1982 to 1983, which involved a multiracial alliance drawn from across Afro- and Indo-Guyanese communities (Figure 1).<sup>212</sup> Notable among the protestors were Afro- and Indo-Guyanese women, who participated in the rebellion because the burdens of the government's "feed, clothe and house the nation" strategy had fallen heaviest upon them in their roles – as defined in the PNC's discourse on citizenship – as wives and mothers.<sup>213</sup> These demands highlighted the extent to which material conditions remained at variance with the PNC's pronouncements on gender equality.<sup>214</sup> PNC statements and legislation, including the 1980 constitution, had reaffirmed women's status as equal citizens with particular rights and protections.<sup>215</sup> The PNC also continued to make statements voicing support for active female participation in political affairs and the necessity of providing education and childcare to facilitate women's entry into the workforce "to join with men in building the economy and the nation".<sup>216</sup>

In practice, the material realities of citizenship for Guyanese women were very different to its legal and related discursive dimensions. The struggles of working-class Guyanese women to reconcile the demands of paid work with domestic responsibilities were documented in the local press, including the PNC's *New Nation*.<sup>217</sup> These hardships were exacerbated by inequities in the labour market. The PNC did attempt to provide remunerated work for Guyanese women, but these opportunities were often restricted to sectors that depended upon low-paid feminized labour, such as the garment industry.<sup>218</sup> In contrast, in the comparatively better-paid male-dominated sugar and bauxite sectors, the PNC

<sup>210</sup>"Work Stoppages Cost Guyanese Workers \$3.3 Million", *Guyana Chronicle*, 16 July 1983, p. 1.

<sup>211</sup>Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, p. 253.

<sup>212</sup>On the "food rebellion", which was sparked by the deaths of three women who were queuing in line for food, see Andaiye's "Making Grassroots Women Across Race Visible in the Guyanese Resistance of the 1970s and Early 1980s", *MaComère*, 12:2 (2010), pp. 127–133. Prior to this issue of *MaComère* becoming available on [Digital Library of the Caribbean](#), I was grateful to Alissa Trotz and Kate Quinn for sharing an earlier version of Andaiye's article with me.

<sup>213</sup>D. Alissa Trotz and Linda Peake, "Work, Family and Organising: An Overview of the Contemporary Economic, Social and Political Roles of Women in Guyana", *Social and Economic Studies*, 50:2 (2001), pp. 67–101.

<sup>214</sup>This is not to homogenize the experiences of Guyanese women, which were mediated by differences of class and race, but it is clear that the economic downturn of the 1980s had uniformly negative consequences for the majority of women.

<sup>215</sup>Constitution of the Co-Operative Republic of 1980, article 29, p. 25.

<sup>216</sup>SHL, Forbes Burnham, *Towards the Socialist Revolution*, Address at the First Biennial Conference of the PNC at Sophia, Georgetown, 18 August 1975 (Ruimveldt, 1975), p. 23.

<sup>217</sup>"The Working-Class Woman Who Needs Help", *The Citizen*, 13 July 1979, pp. 4–5; UM-W, Labadie Collection "Grassroots: Banned Items: Why Are They Still Sold On Our Pavements?", *New Nation*, 28 June 1981, p. 7.

<sup>218</sup>Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, p. 185.

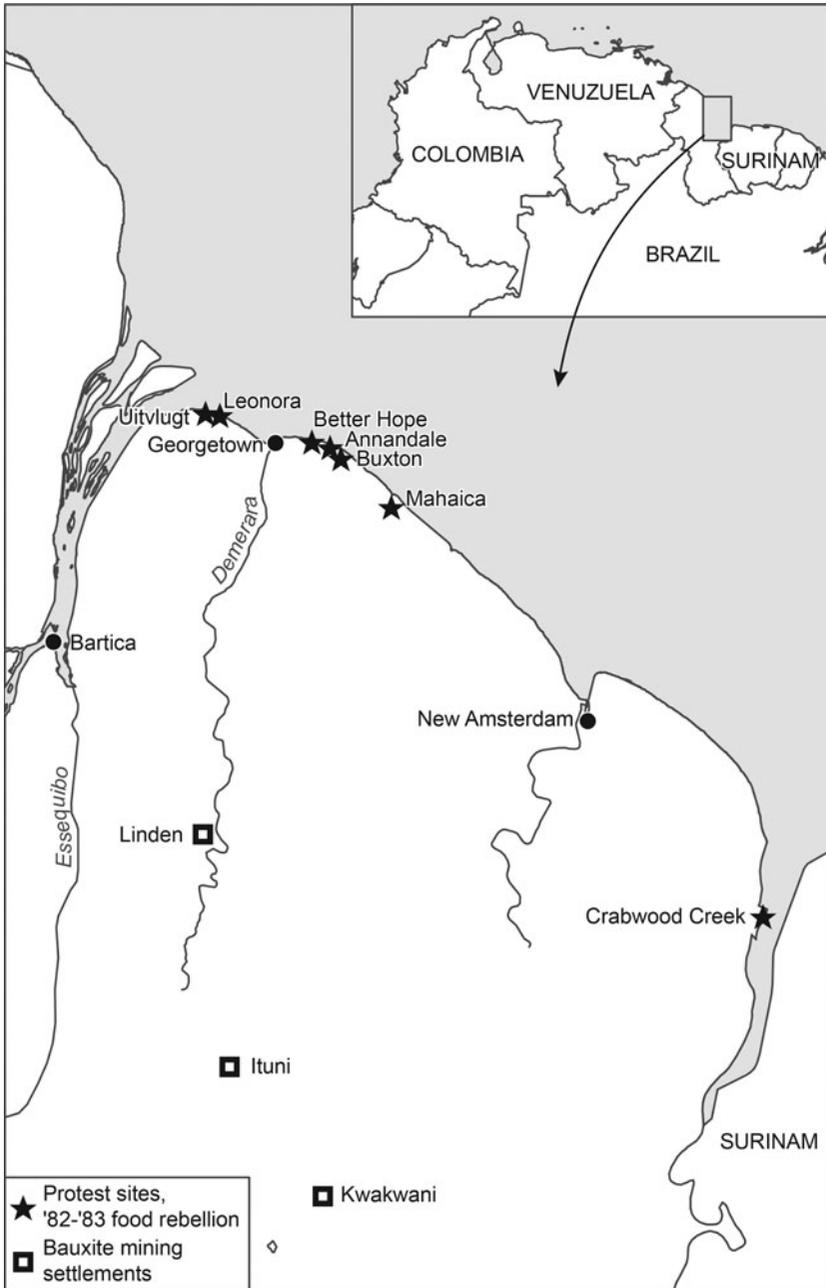


Figure 1. Map of Guyana.

continued to argue that agreements for higher minimum wages were in keeping with its aim of making “the small man, a real man”.<sup>219</sup> The PNC’s Women’s Revolutionary Socialist Movement (WRSM) perpetuated the perception that Guyanese women were responsible for reproducing male labour power in service of the nation. One of the WRSM’s initiatives included the operation of mobile food canteens, which were stationed outside workplaces, such as the port of Georgetown. The acting GLU president, Sam Walker, stated that the canteens were beneficial because they enabled “workers to obtain a meal without having to rush home”, thereby contributing to workers’ welfare and productivity.<sup>220</sup>

These inequities became even more acute as the effects of the PNC’s austerity programme worsened during the early 1980s. PNC statements and publications continued to make it clear that Guyanese women were responsible for feeding their families in accordance with the government’s “produce or perish” doctrine.<sup>221</sup> The WRSM co-ordinated cooking demonstrations, which aimed to teach Guyanese women how locally grown cassava and rice could be substituted for banned imports such as wheat flour.<sup>222</sup> However, at a time when infrastructure was collapsing and shortages of essential goods were contributing to malnutrition and increased rates of related diseases, many Guyanese women opted to defy the PNC by playing an active role in Guyana’s expanding parallel economy.<sup>223</sup> Typically, this involved women smuggling contraband into Guyana directly, or selling and purchasing goods on the black market, thus securing much-needed income and supplies for their families.<sup>224</sup>

Participation in the parallel economy was dangerous work that entailed various risks, including sexual exploitation, with some women reportedly turning to sex work to raise capital for smuggling trips into neighbouring Suriname, and harassment from the security forces who were tasked with prosecuting traders selling prohibited goods on the streets of Georgetown. Many female traders also had to combine this work with their routine caring obligations to their families, and, if it was available to them, renumerated work in the formal sector.<sup>225</sup> However, although these gendered forms of class exploitation contributed to Afro- and Indo-Guyanese women’s decision to support the food rebellion, it did not free them from the reproductive labours that sustained the movement. During the rebellion, women participated in street protests and demonstrations, but they also assumed responsibilities for providing food, distributing WPA publications, and facilitating the organization of public meetings and so-called bottom house gatherings. These were forms of labour that reflected gendered assumptions about women’s familial

<sup>219</sup>UW-M, Labadie Collection, “Better Wages for ‘Small Man’”, *New Nation*, 28 August 1977, p. 13.

<sup>220</sup>UW-M, Labadie Collection, “Penwa Praised by GLU”, *New Nation*, 4 October 1981, pp. 6–7.

<sup>221</sup>Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, ch. 8.

<sup>222</sup>“WSRM Fund-Raiser”, *New Nation*, 24 July 1983, p. 2.

<sup>223</sup>Andaiye, “Making Grassroots Women Across Race Visible”, p. 128. On the social impact of the economic collapse see: SHL, *Guyana Human Rights Report 1981–1982*.

<sup>224</sup>Yvonne Holder, *Women Traders in Guyana* (Santiago, 1988). See also: George K. Dadds, “The Role of Women in the Underground Economy of Guyana”, in Francis M. Abraham and Subhadra P. Abraham (eds), *Women, Development and Change: The Third World Experience* (Bristol, IN, 1988), pp. 180–216.

<sup>225</sup>Holder, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 26, 30, and 36.

and societal roles and contributed to the perception that they were adjuncts to their male counterparts.<sup>226</sup>

That said, for all the food rebellion's internal hierarchies, the movement was highly symbolic. The rebellion peaked in mid-1983. In May, bauxite workers protested against food shortages in Linden, in a series of demonstrations that drew support from other residents of the town with similar complaints.<sup>227</sup> During these protests, bauxite workers turned the PNC's productivist rhetoric against the regime. Workers and their supporters carried placards with the slogan "hungry workers can't produce".<sup>228</sup> The demonstrations escalated the following month when bauxite workers began one-day-a-week rolling strikes, which provoked parallel stoppages in the sugar industry by Indo-Guyanese cane cutters and Afro-Guyanese factory workers.<sup>229</sup> Since these sugar industry employees were striking out of harvest season, their protest was principally a sympathy action. The sympathetic nature of the action made it all the more significant. Not only were Afro- and Indo-Guyanese sugar workers collaborating in support of Afro-Guyanese mineworkers, but they were engaging in strike action at a point in the agricultural cycle when they had limited industrial power.<sup>230</sup> The PNC's response to the rolling strikes was to impose a three-day week on the bauxite industry, which, in turn, precipitated a six-week general strike that began mid-June.<sup>231</sup>

The general strike in the bauxite industry was coordinated by the GMWU, but many of the protests that occurred during this period relied on the efforts of rank-and-file representatives of Afro-Guyanese mineworkers and Indo-Guyanese cane cutters. These workers established the Sugar and Bauxite Workers' Unity Committee (SBWUC), which emphasized the multiracial character of the Guyanese working-class population as a source of potential strength, rather than division.<sup>232</sup> This was reflected in SBWUC publications that stressed the shared history of class exploitation under slavery and indenture, as well as the importance of independent organization free from the racialized politics of the PPP, the PNC, and their respective trade unions.<sup>233</sup> SBWUC demonstrations and rallies, in combination with

<sup>226</sup>These inequalities would contribute to the formation of Red Thread, which was established to represent women's interests independently of the male-dominated political parties. Andaiye, "Making Grassroots Women Across Race Visible", pp. 136–137; Abraham, *Labour and the Multiracial Project in the Caribbean*, p. 129; Kimberly Nettles, "Becoming Red Thread Women: Alternative Visions of Gendered Politics in Post-independence Guyana", *Social Movement Studies*, 6:1 (2007), pp. 57–82.

<sup>227</sup>TNA, FCO 44/3259, W.K. Slatcher, High Commission, Georgetown, to J.C. Edwards, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 13 June 1983.

<sup>228</sup>LMA, Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA/4463/B/13/04/008, "Bauxite Workers Lead Bread and Butter Fight", *Day Clean*, 8:17 (1983).

<sup>229</sup>In the case of the bauxite sector, the GMWU outlined its members' grievances in a memorandum, which, in addition to food shortages, cited long-standing concerns relating to mismanagement, job insecurity, and managers' tendency to blame workers for the industry's problems. International Institute of Social History (IISH), Miners International Federation Archives, Folder 288, Memo. Submitted by the Guyana Mine Workers' Union and the Guyana Bauxite Supervisors' Union, July 1983.

<sup>230</sup>Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, p. 245.

<sup>231</sup>On the events which precipitated the general strike, see TNA, FCO 44/3259, W.K. Slatcher, High Commission, Georgetown, to J.C. Edwards, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 13 June 1983.

<sup>232</sup>Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, pp. 247–252.

<sup>233</sup>"Report on Strike Action", *Open Word*, 6 June 1983, pp. 1 and 4 in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Latin America Report, (FBIS/LAR) No. JPRS 83988, 27 July 1983, pp. 60–61.

spontaneous meetings in participants' villages and homes, also provided Afro- and Indo-Guyanese communities with a shared sense of their collective struggles and aspirations.<sup>234</sup> Such unity would have been unthinkable two decades earlier, when PNC and PPP elites had stoked racial animosities by warning their respective communities about the potential implications of an opposition victory prior to the attainment of independence. The resulting violence had created racially segregated villages and deep-seated animosities, which activists, particularly those associated with ASCRIA and, later, the WPA, had worked to repair over the course of the 1970s.<sup>235</sup> These efforts culminated in the 1983 protests. During this period of unrest, members of Afro- and Indo-Guyanese communities in coastal villages and in the interior mining town of Linden attempted to remap the racial geographies that had emerged in the wake of Guyana's violent transition to independence.<sup>236</sup> These efforts involved marching between different "African" and "Indian" settlements in a demonstration of collective class solidarity.<sup>237</sup> In other cases, meetings were held in spaces that had served as an unofficial boundary between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese communities, thus neutralizing a potential site of tension or conflict.<sup>238</sup>

This is not to suggest that racialized political divisions disappeared. The SBWUC's advocacy of independent worker organisation brought it into conflict with the GAWU. The result was that GAWU activists, who feared a loss of influence, had to be pressured into supporting the strikes by rank-and-file workers.<sup>239</sup> Even then, GAWU leaders reportedly told their members not to support Afro-Guyanese bauxite workers, because such support had rarely been extended to Indo-Guyanese sugar workers prior to the events of the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>240</sup> This led the WPA's *Open Word* to claim that the GAWU was incapable of representing the Guyanese working class as a whole.<sup>241</sup> Support for the WPA also divided villages and even individual families, especially along generational lines, with older Afro- and Indo-Guyanese residents maintaining their respective support for the PNC and the PPP in opposition to younger community members who were more willing to embrace the possibility of change through multiracial collective protest.<sup>242</sup>

The PNC exploited this potential for division. The early 1980s witnessed an upsurge in violent crime, not only in Georgetown, but also in rural villages where Indo-Guyanese communities resided. So-called kick-down-the-door-gangs, which were heavily armed Afro-Guyanese groups with links to the security forces,

<sup>234</sup> Abraham, *Labour and the Multiracial Project in the Caribbean*, pp. 128–131.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 6, and Garner, *Guyana: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, ch. 10.

<sup>236</sup> Andaiye, "Making Grassroots Women Across Race Visible", p. 132.

<sup>237</sup> Abraham, *Labour and the Multiracial Project in the Caribbean*, pp. 127–130.

<sup>238</sup> Garner, *Ethnicity, Class and Gender*, p. 246.

<sup>239</sup> "Report on Strike Action", *Open Word*, p. 4.

<sup>240</sup> On the GAWU's attitude to the protests which appeared to harden over time, see Goupal, *Resistance and Change*, pp. 285–286.

<sup>241</sup> "Open Word Slap at Mirror", *Open Word*, 6 June 1983, p. 2 in FBIS/LAR, No. JPRS 83988, 27 July 1983, pp. 81–82.

<sup>242</sup> On these divisions, see the excerpt from a transcript of an interview conducted by Sara Abraham with WPA activist Wazir Mohamed in *Labour and the Multiracial Project in the Caribbean*, pp. 189–190.

terrorized neighbourhoods. Armed robberies and physical violence were a constant threat.<sup>243</sup> Among the principal targets of this violence were women, and particularly Indo-Guyanese women. Contemporary reports and later accounts recorded that women were either too afraid to leave their homes or they gathered in public spaces to protect each other.<sup>244</sup> The tragic irony was that the WPA had recognized Guyanese women were a constituent component of the working people, and women had responded to this call by co-ordinating protests and risking violent reprisals from the security forces.<sup>245</sup> However, neither the WPA nor the SBWUC extended any meaningful reciprocal support to these women – even though an SBWUC statement had promised to protect victims of PNC repression.<sup>246</sup> The failure to support Guyanese women involved in the food rebellion meant the material and affective costs of sustaining the demonstrations became too much, particularly once the SBWUC announced its intention to pause the protests on 6 August, following a partial resolution to the general strike in the bauxite industry the previous month.<sup>247</sup>

The collapse of the food rebellion was the last major episode of collective protest directed against Burnham's PNC, even though shortages persisted in many towns. Linden was described as "picture of depression and decay", but many workers were too afraid to object to such hardships.<sup>248</sup> Bauxite workers had good reason to be fearful. In September, the industry's management had retrenched more than 1,700 workers – a figure that included many workers and shop stewards who had been involved in the general strike.<sup>249</sup> Additional anti-union measures adopted by the PNC included the 1984 Labour Amendment Act, which stipulated that the pro-regime TUC was the only organization with the legal mandate to negotiate wage increases.<sup>250</sup> To counter this, a coalition of anti-government trade unions, including the traditionally pro-PNC Public Service Union (PSU), took control of the TUC's executive council and its new president, the PSU's George Daniels, demanded higher wages for Congress' members and an end to the cycle of public

<sup>243</sup>TNA, FCO 44/3260, M. Canning, British High Commission to M. Cumming, Security Department Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 14 September 1983; "Bandits Continue to Spread Terror", *Catholic Standard*, 4 September 1983; LMA, Eric and Jessica Huntley Collection, LMA/4463/B/13/04/06, "Bandits and Political Terror", *Dayclean*, 11:16, 19 March 1982; LMA/4463/B/13/04/007, "Masked Bandits Terrorise Wismar Residents", *Dayclean*, 8:53, 25 December 1982.

<sup>244</sup>Singh, *Guyana: Politics in a Plantation Society*, pp. 86–89; Andaiye, "Making Grassroots Women Across Race Visible", pp. 132–133.

<sup>245</sup>In 1980, for example, a "grassroots off-shoot" of the WPA, Women Against Terror, was launched in order to co-ordinate protest against the increasingly repressive measures adopted by the PNC and its allies in the security forces. Andaiye, *Op. Cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>246</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>247</sup>On the end of the food rebellion and bauxite strike, see respectively, *ibid.*, p. 8, and IISH, MIF Archives, Folder 288, Memorandum of Agreement Entered into Between the Guyana Mining Enterprise Limited and the Guyana Mineworkers' Union Enclosed in C. James, General Secretary GMWU, to Peter Tait, General Secretary, Miners International Federation, 10 August 1983.

<sup>248</sup>TNA, FCO 44/3260, W.K. Slatcher, High Commission, Georgetown, to J.C. Edwards, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 9 December 1983.

<sup>249</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup>Spinner, *A Social and Political History*, p. 212.

sector job cuts.<sup>251</sup> For the average rank-and-file union member, however, the split within the TUC simply created yet another dilemma. The following year, a Canadian trade unionist reported that whilst many public sector employees were supportive of the anti-PNC unions, they were instructed to attend the government-sponsored May Day rally or risk losing their jobs.<sup>252</sup>

The PNC's growing indifference to workers' waning enthusiasm for the regime was further exemplified by the government's insistence that employees of state corporations participate in the Guyanese-iteration of the North Korean "mass games", which had become a feature of the government's attempts to showcase its ongoing commitment to Third World socialism and the continued importance it attached to collective forms of discipline.<sup>253</sup> Choreographed public spectacles were accompanied by renewed pledges to fulfil the objectives of the PNC's co-operative socialist project.<sup>254</sup> In statements and speeches, PNC officials invoked the "will to survive" and referenced the party's "resourcefulness" in defiance of the opposition forces arranged against the regime, with the IMF and the US targeted for comment and criticism in the local press.<sup>255</sup> Internally, however, PNC elites were debating the future of the party's co-operative socialism.<sup>256</sup> Reportedly, there were discussions regarding a possible power sharing arrangement with the PPP and the necessity of rapprochement with the IMF and the World Bank.<sup>257</sup> The WPA was also engaged in internal discussions regarding its future.<sup>258</sup> In the wake of the US invasion of Grenada, the party's leadership determined that it would seek a path to power through elections, rather than through revolution.<sup>259</sup>

The WPA's opportunity came in 1985, when Desmond Hoyte, Burnham's successor, scheduled national elections for 9 December. The WPA's hopes of effecting an immediate change through a democratic transition proved misplaced,

<sup>251</sup>"How the PNC Held, Lost Control of the Trades Union Congress", *Caribbean Contact*, December 1984, pp. 2 and 5 in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Latin America Report, No. JPRS-LAM-85-007, 24 January 1985, pp. 84–86. For an extended discussion of the split within the TUC, see Garner, *Ethnicity, Class and Gender*, ch. 11.

<sup>252</sup>IISHL, ICFTU Archives, AD55.70017, Caribbean Congress of Labour Report on Mission to Guyana by Craig Grant, 30 April to 4 May.

<sup>253</sup>TNA, FCO 44/4307, D.J. Couvell, British High Commission, Georgetown, to R.A. Onions, Department of Trade, 6 June 1984. On Guyana's Mass Games, see Vicki Sung-yeon Kwon, "Guyanese Mass Games: Spectacles that 'Moulded' the Nation in a North Korean Way", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 20:2 (2019), pp. 180–203.

<sup>254</sup>Robert J. Alexander, *A History of Organized Labour in the English-Speaking West Indies* (Westport, CT, 2004), pp. 399–405.

<sup>255</sup>SHL, "The Will to Survive", Address by L.F.S. Burnham at 5th Biennial Congress of the PNC at Sophia, Georgetown, 14 to 21 May 1983; BL, "PNC to Stay on Socialist Construction Course", *New Nation*, 28 August 1983, p. 3; BL, "US Veto of Food Loan is Inconsistent", *New Nation*, 16 June 1981, p. 1; BL, "The IMF ... and Guyana's Balance of Payments Troubles", *Guyana Chronicle*, 30 May 1983, p. 6.

<sup>256</sup>David Hinds, "Ethnicity and the Elusive Quest for Power Sharing in Guyana", *Ethnopolitics*, 9:3–4 (2010), p. 347.

<sup>257</sup>On the PNC–PPP talks, which were later abandoned by Hoyte, see Halim Majeed, *Forbes Burnham: National Reconciliation and National Unity, 1984–1985* (Georgetown, 2005).

<sup>258</sup>SHL, *Draft Programme for the Democratic Republic: Under Discussion within the WPA* (1985?).

<sup>259</sup>David Hinds, "The Grenada Revolution and the Caribbean Left: The Case of Guyana's Working People's Alliance (WPA)", *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies*, 3–4:35 (2010), pp. 102–103.

however. Amidst accusations of electoral fraud, the PNC recorded a landslide victory at the expense of its principal rivals.<sup>260</sup> The election outcome may have changed little in the short term, but the political parties' campaign materials indicate that Guyana was in the middle of an epochal shift. In the case of the WPA, what is striking about the party's election promises was the greater emphasis on the language of democratic renewal, socio-economic rehabilitation, and multiracialism in lieu of the explicitly revolutionary, anti-imperialist, and socialist terminology that characterized its 1979 programme.<sup>261</sup> The WPA continued to emphasize its "Rodneyite position", including the importance of devolved forms of collective authority, but this was partnered with concessions regarding the potentially positive contributions of private capital to the creation of a state-managed mixed economy in a democratic republic that guaranteed civil liberties and free elections.<sup>262</sup> In other words, although civil and democratic rights had always been an important component of the party's agenda, the WPA now regarded them as central to effecting change and reconstructing Guyana's society and economy.<sup>263</sup> This decision to dispense with explicitly Marxist-Leninist language drew criticism from Jagan and did little to repair the troubled relationship between the PPP and the reformed WPA, even as the two parties attempted to work together in the late 1980s.<sup>264</sup>

The PNC was affected by similar tensions regarding the importance of socialism to its political programme. Following his ascension to the presidency, Hoyte moderated the party's socialist rhetoric and then abandoned it altogether in the aftermath of the 1985 elections, when he marginalized the PNC's remaining socialist ideologues, and set Guyana on a path to political and economic liberalization through reconciliation with the IMF and the World Bank – a project that was just as ideological as the one it displaced.<sup>265</sup> This is not to imply there was a convergence of WPA-PNC thinking, however. For the remainder of the period, the WPA remained highly critical of the government's failure to improve the security situation; the problematic implementation of democratic reforms; and the presentation of simplistic solutions to Guyana's economic problems, which were often explained with exclusive reference to ownership structures, rather than the politicized way the PNC had run nationalized industries.<sup>266</sup>

<sup>260</sup>BL, "Elections were above board", *New Nation*, 15 December 1985, p. 1.

<sup>261</sup>SHL, *WPA Manifesto: For the Redemption, Reconstruction, and Rebirth of Guyana* (Georgetown, 1985).

<sup>262</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 12–14.

<sup>263</sup>SHL, Eusi Kwayana, *Forward to the Democratic Republic* (Georgetown, 1985).

<sup>264</sup>Hinds, "The Grenada Revolution", p. 103. On human rights' displacement of Marxist-Leninism within the wider Third World movement, and its implications for radical politics, see Salar Mohandesi, *Red Internationalism: Anti-Imperialism and Human Rights in the Global Sixties and Seventies* (Cambridge, 2023), ch. 6.

<sup>265</sup>In 1985, Guyana had been declared ineligible to draw further funds from the IMF. On the events that led to this decision and Hoyte's subsequent decision to reconcile, see Tyrone Ferguson, *Structural Adjustment and Good Governance: The Case of Guyana* (Georgetown, 1995), ch. 2; and Hinds, *Ethno-Politics and Power Sharing*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>266</sup>On these respective criticisms, see SHL, *WPA Looks at the Hoyte Administration after One Year* (Georgetown, 1986); *Electoral Processes Concern all the Parties and all the People* (Georgetown, 1988); Clive Thomas, *Privatisation and Disinvestment* (Georgetown, 1990).

## Conclusion: The Ends of Decolonization and Third Worldism

The debates and disputes that followed Burnham's death underscore a critical point: the transition to post-socialist futures throughout the Third World was just as contested and uncertain as the outcome of earlier struggles to build socialist states in the decades that followed the end of empire.<sup>267</sup> These post-independence state-building efforts had taken diverse forms. This was a dynamic that reflected the situated and contingent nature of Third World socialism, rather than its derivative character, as contemporary and later critics claimed. That said, for all the plurality of Third World socialism, the common factor that shaped the state-building projects pursued by political elites, activists, and ordinary citizens was the view that decolonization was incomplete. This was as true for Guyana as it was for those other Third World states that have attracted more attention and comment from historians. The relative neglect of Guyana is surprising. Events in Guyana during the 1970s were both symptomatic and constitutive of wider global dynamics. The PNC was a significant presence in the NIEO movement and a leading advocate of Third World solidarity during this period. The PNC's support for Third Worldism was complemented by a domestic agenda that not only took inspiration from policies pioneered by other Third World states, but also sought to implement novel solutions to Guyana's history of underdevelopment. These dynamics were equally apparent in the case of the anti-PNC forces, which emerged to oppose Burnham's regime. Activists and intellectuals, such as Rodney, drew on their knowledge of Third World revolutionary thinkers and their experience of other postcolonial settings to critique what they regarded as the "pseudo-socialism" of the PNC. At the same time, opponents of the PNC also took the specificities of the Guyana situation to devise theories that explained the workings of peripheral capitalism and the postcolonial state, and outlined strategies for advancing Third Worldism at the expense of the comprador classes, which had held power since independence.<sup>268</sup>

At the centre of these struggles in Guyana and its unfinished revolt against empire were two competing visions for the state and its citizenship regime. On the one hand, there was the PNC's vanguardism, which emphasized the primacy of the party, state, and nation as prerequisites for the empowerment of citizens and the safeguarding of their rights. On the other, there was the WPA, which rejected the paternalism and hierarchies associated with post-independence party politics in the Caribbean in favour of devolving power to the people through leaderless organizations and institutions that fostered debate and deliberation across racialized class lines. These divergent conceptions of political participation and citizenship brought Guyana to the brink of a popular revolution in the early 1980s. The socio-economic crisis that was produced by the failure of the PNC's co-operative socialist project was a critical

<sup>267</sup>Fred Halliday, "Third World Socialism: 1989 and After", in George Lawson, Chris Armbruster, and Michael Cox (eds), *The Global 1989: Continuity and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 112–134.

<sup>268</sup>See, for example, Clive Thomas, *The Rise of the Authoritarian State in Peripheral Societies* (New York, 1984); and *idem*, *The Poor and the Powerless: Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean* (New York, 1988).

factor in the protests, but Guyanese people also took to the streets because of a particular understanding of freedom and autonomy, which viewed individual and collective rights and responsibilities as indivisible. This was a worldview shaped by the history of unfreedom in a context where the very humanity of the Guyanese people had been disavowed with reference to their relationship to the means of production and related labour processes. The PNC had recognized this a decade earlier. In 1970, following the founding of the co-operative republic, the PNC had promised to emancipate Guyana's citizens if they worked in a productive and disciplined way for the nation state and its nationalized industries. Among the Guyanese people, there was no singular response to this demand, or the PNC's wider co-operative socialist project. For some, namely the PNC's ever-dwindling number of supporters amongst the Afro-Guyanese middle and lower classes, co-operative socialism became a mechanism for personal advancement, because it provided access to patronage in the form of jobs and other public goods. For others, including party elites and ordinary citizens, the PNC's co-operative socialism appealed because it promised to deliver on the expectations of independence and its potentially radical ideas for remaking Guyanese society resonated with their worldview. When these promises did not materialize, with the result that Guyana failed to move beyond a state-capitalist model, a broad cross-section of the citizenry attempted to remake their world through WPA coordinated protests and demonstrations. The failure of this endeavour – which coincided with defeat of Michael Manley's government in Jamaica and the US invasion of Grenada – marked the ends of decolonization and Third Worldism in the Caribbean, and the beginnings of new struggles against new forms of coloniality in the guise of the emerging neoliberal and “good governance” agendas.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>269</sup>On these events in the early 1980s, which marked the ends of decolonisation and Third Worldism in the Caribbean, see Scott, “Counting Women's Caring Work”, p. 124. Insightful works on the new struggles and their relationship to prior struggles include: Aaron Kamugisha, *Beyond Coloniality: Citizenship and Freedom in the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition* (Bloomington, IN, 2019); Brian Meeks, *Critical Interventions in Caribbean Politics and Theory* (Jackson, MI, 2014); Shalini Puri (ed.), *The Legacies of Caribbean Radical Politics* (Abingdon, 2011); David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC, 2004); Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham, NC, 2012); Deborah Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Sovereignty, Witnessing, Repair* (Durham, NC, 2019).