



TEXT OF ADDRESS BY DR CHEDDI JAGAN
PRESIDENT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC
OF GUYANA
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
CARICOM HEADS OF GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE
PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
OCTOBER 28, 1992.

Mr Chairman; fellow Heads of Government of Caricom; Mr Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community Secretariat; Deputy Secretary General; other distinguished guests:

I am touched by the cordial welcome which Prime Minister, Hon. Patrick Manning and the people of Trinidad and Tobago have extended to me and my delegation. I wish to record our deep gratitude.

Mr Chairman, I wish also to acknowledge your presence and that of the representative of Prime Minister Hon. James Mitchell at my Inauguration and the many fervent good wishes which my colleagues have transmitted to me following the victory of the PPP/CIVIC at the recent poll. I am delighted to know that such an enormous fund of goodwill has been placed at my government's disposal.

When I was sworn in on October 9, the same date when British troops had overthrown my first government thirty-nine years ago, I said it was a new beginning -- a beginning to attain national, racial/ethnic and working class unity, which we had then achieved.

Today, I can say that for the region, it is also for me a new beginning. It is like home-coming. For it was in 1945, as a youthful trade unionist and political aspirant, that I had adopted the Caribbean Labour Congress resolution at Montego Bay for Federation with dominion status and internal self-government for each unit -- a position which I recorded in 1948 in a debate in the Legislative Council on regional integration, a position for which I was attacked by the plantocracy and vested interests.

Regrettably, the unity achieved in the then British Guiana and in the Caribbean was shattered by the cold war. We were the principal victims. But the region also suffered immensely. Our dreams for national and social liberation evaporated.

We were caught in the cold tug-o-war between the East and West. Ideals, principles and solidarity were often jettisoned for pragmatism and self-interest. We talked

endlessly about unity and independence but in reality we became more and more divided and dependent.

Federation came; Independence came; CARIFTA came; CARICOM came. Also came strategies for development -- the Puerto Rican industrialisation by invitation model; the import-substitution model; the alliance for progress; regional integration; the Caribbean Basin Initiative; the Brady Plan, and so on...

We were examined and over-examined by "wise men". At every step, the people were told that the next step would be better. But betterment never came. And the masses of the people have become disillusioned with independence and the trappings of sovereignty and power.

Today, we are faced with seemingly insurmountable problems -- stagnating economies, indebtedness, declining living standards, unemployment, poverty, crime, a huge import food bill, exodus of skills and, the drug menace -- a paradox of regional hunger in the midst of potential plenty.

While there is talk of globalisation and one global village, let us not forget that our crisis is only part and parcel of a more universal phenomenon - the collapse of the socialist camp; prolonged recession and stagnation in the west; the disintegration of the underdeveloped Third World or the Last World; the development of trading blocs and tendencies towards protectionism and trade wars.

The ending of the cold war has not made life easier for us. In the one hand, we witnessed the collapse of the socialist world because of over-centralisation and concentration, bureaucratic/command type government and management. On the other hand, the West does not hold out any ready-made solutions to our predicament.

The rate of growth in the industrialised world's output in the 1980s is less than half of that of the 1960s, and the rate of world trade has fallen even more. Meanwhile the gap in living standards is growing in every country and between the North and the South. The richest 20 per cent have incomes 150 times greater than that of the poorest 20 per cent. And the prospects for our region are not as bright as they may sometimes seem. And as usual, it is the working people who have to pay the price.

A prospective 1985-1995 study for the Caribbean and Latin America by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) shows that by 1995, poverty will become more widespread, unemployment will increase by nearly 50 percent, and the region's foreign debt will nearly double!

It is necessary to analyse and under the anatomy of

