

sentiments, contradictory guidelines, and 'lurches' in supporting various political currents.

The exacerbation of class contradictions and mounting social tensions have a decisive impact on the alignment of forces. Increasingly brutal exploitation and monopoly attempts to shift the burden of the crisis on to the shoulders of the masses make for an intensification of the strike movement and the growth of class struggles in many West European countries. Whereas the number of strikers in industrialised capitalist countries in the 1960s averaged 37 million annually, in the early 1980s it nearly doubled; trade union estimates set the number of strikers at 71 million in 1981. The strikes were characterised by perseverance and a long duration, and many of them assumed a political hue.

The exacerbation of antagonisms between labour and capital in an atmosphere of economic crisis leads, on the one hand, to growing working-class militancy and more vigorous actions by the working people, helping create the prerequisites of a change in the social consciousness of the masses in favour of the left forces, and, on the other, to feverish quests by the ruling classes for ways and means of neutralising these trends. At the moment the bourgeoisie uses unemployment and social insecurity to put pressure on the working people, to divide and intimidate them, to undermine the trade unions, and dampen the strike movement. More and more frequently, aggressive elements in some countries resort to the weapon of right extremism and neofascism, of various shadings of terrorism, to stem the advance of left forces.

Conservatives have lately stepped up their efforts to coordinate action on the continental level, to unite against democratic and progressive movements. The European People's Party representing national Christian democratic currents, and the Federation of Liberal and Democratic Parties of the European Community were formed back in 1976. At a conference in Paris this year, so-called European Democratic Union, which groups West European conservative, liberal, and Christian democratic parties, decided to extend the 'right-wing front' and set up a 'Conservative International'.

The communist parties are faced with difficult tasks in this situation; they must ensure defence of the working people's economic and political rights, help raise their class consciousness, and build up working-class influence on developments in West European countries. In advocating the cohesion of the working class, unity of action of the political parties representing it, and joint efforts to bar reaction, defend democratic achievements and open new prospects for social progress, the Communists work to provide the decisive conditions for genuine social changes.

It will depend on the struggle of progressive and democratic forces whether there is a new swing to the left on the West European political scene and whether new bridgeheads are won for real changes in the interests of the working people, of peace, democracy, and socialism. Where Western Europe goes will depend on the outcome of this struggle.

**Working Group of the Commission
on Problems of the Class Struggle in
Industrialised Capitalist Countries**

¹ See 'Africa in the Early Eighties', *WMR*, September 1981, and 'Latin America: Decade with a Hard Beginning', *WMR*, March 1982.

² See *WMR*, June 1980.

³ *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Vol. XXII, January 9, 1976, p. 27.502.

⁴ *Le Monde*, June 8, 1982.

⁵ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development; it groups 24, mostly West European, countries.

⁶ *Le Monde*, June 8, 1982.

⁷ *The Guardian*, June 7, 1982.

⁸ *Le Monde*, June 24, 1982.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ The USA expects to increase profits from foreign trade through the growing exports of coal by more than 14 billion dollars towards the year 2000. See *Business Week*, November 9, 1981.

¹¹ Western Europe is much worse off for energy; in the mid-1970s the EEC countries covered 61 per cent of their fuel requirements with imports, while the USA had to import only 19 per cent of its fuel.

¹² *Daily World*, June 4, 1982.

¹³ In Britain, for instance, nearly 200 local government bodies, including the Council of Greater London and the Manchester Municipal Council as well as all Welsh municipalities, have proclaimed their territory a nuclear-free zone.

¹⁴ Quoted from press release.

¹⁵ *WMR*, June 1980, p. 4.

¹⁶ *Der Spiegel*, April 5, 1982, p. 19.

¹⁷ See *L'Express*, January 31, 1981, p. 32.

¹⁸ *L'Humanite*, June 21, 1982.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Rizospastis*, July 11, 1982.

the party

FOR THE CAUSE OF THE WORKING CLASS, FOR THE INTERESTS OF ALL WORKING PEOPLE

Janet Jagan - CC Secretary, People's
Progressive Party of Guyana

THE People's Progressive Party (PPP) of Guyana held its 21st Congress on Georgetown from July 31 to August 2, 1982. The Congress was attended by 504 delegates and 150 observers and by 20 delegations from fraternal parties and national liberation movements. 'Strengthen the party! Defend the masses! Liberate Guyana!' was the slogan of the Congress. This slogan went to the heart of the situation now facing the working people and vanguard party, the PPP. In the 1950s, when it led the struggle for independence, the PPP was a revolutionary democratic party. At a Special Conference in 1969 it took a decision to transform itself into a Marxist-Leninist type party. This transformation has been going on successfully since that time.

The Central Committee Report to the 21st Congress, submitted by General Secretary Cheddi Jagan, said that the party has won the role of vanguard by its loyalty to the working class, its unflinching adherence to principles and constant struggle against right and left opportunism, and its undeviating internationalism. The party has grown quantitatively and qualitatively. Its influence has increased at the political, ideological and economic levels. The party's patient ideological education work, propaganda and agitation are bearing fruit. As a result, the Guyanese are among the most politically enlightened and class-conscious peoples of the Caribbean. The party noted a marked improvement in its organisational structure. District and regional committees are functioning in accordance with the Party Constitution and generally show improvements.

And yet, despite the signs that the PPP is in good health, there are many weaknesses that have to be removed. The Congress was of the opinion that all efforts must be put into strengthening the party organisationally and ideologically and into activating the masses.

The group, the basic unit of the party, is the foundation and source of strength. It is the party's closest link with the masses. Here, too, we have had some advance. In

addition to the coastlands, the traditional areas of our strength, party groups have now been established in remote interior areas, mainly among the Amerindian population. Many groups have increased membership and apply the party's policies creatively while others lack good leadership and working programmes. In certain areas emigration due to unemployment, discrimination and growing poverty have resulted in the loss of some activists.

In Georgetown and nearby areas special political work has been going on at factories and work sites, mainly agitational, distributing literature and handbills. Fund raising by groups has been excellent. House to house campaigns have been carried out in most areas, in particular those where the ruling People's National Congress (PNC) used to be strong, with the result that it is losing influence.

Delegates were urged to expand membership by recruiting the most advanced persons among the workers, peasants and other sections of the population; to continuously adopt a businesslike approach to the functioning of groups, district and regional committees; to strictly adhere to the principles of democratic centralism and to vigorously extend the influence of the party. The first CC meeting held after the Congress decided to set up a top-level Action Committee that will concentrate on fulfilling the directive to strengthen the party organisationally and ideologically.

The slogans of the Congress echoed through the Central Committee Report and the contributions to the discussion made by 34 delegates. The report began the detailed examination of the economic and social crisis facing Guyana with these words: 'Our dear land has never in living memory found itself in such a calamitous situation. Everywhere there are signs of collapse. The masses are at their wits' end to find the way to survive.' The Report referred to the stepped-up assaults on democracy and to the conclusions of the International Team of Observers at the December 1980 elections. '... On the basis of abundant and clear evidence,' it was stated, '... the election was rigged massively and flagrantly. Fortunately, however, the scale of the fraud made it impossible to conceal either from the Guyanese public or the outside world.'

The economic crisis is going deeper. One minister of the ruling PNC admitted that the country is 'tottering on the brink of collapse'. The crisis manifests itself primarily in an ever-increasing budgetary deficit, which jumped from \$124 million in 1978 to \$274 million in 1981 and is expected to stand at 45 per cent of current revenue by the end of 1982. However, in view of a sharp decline in production, the deficit is likely to be higher.

The reasons for this situation were outlined in the Central Committee Report. Firstly, tribute going to the ruling elite in the form of high salaries and fat allowances, plus an overbloated bureaucratic, military and paramilitary apparatus. Secondly, debt and compensation payments to foreign banks; they have increased from 10 million Guyanese dollars in 1964 to 462 million dollars in 1982. Guyana is a classical example of foreign aid becoming a noose that is tightening round the people's neck.

Dependence on the capitalist world is increasing from year to year. Guyana spends 41 per cent of its foreign earnings on oil imports. The PPP blamed the ruling party for scrapping the nation's railways and failing to implement the hydro-electric schemes which the PPP had initiated when in government. The regime was severely criticised for mismanagement and corruption which have led to markedly reduced production. But it puts the blame on strikes.

The lack of foreign exchange not only causes severe shortages of basic foodstuffs and hence blackmarketing, but has resulted in the shortage of raw materials, spare parts and capital equipment. The factories have to close down or work intermittently. This applies particularly to the nationalised bauxite and sugar industries.

Pressures from the International Monetary Fund which have led to the removal of subsidies, higher prices, massive dismissal of workers and heavier taxes, have caused additional burdens to the working people. Real per capita income fell off by 44 per

cent between 1976 and 1980. Devaluation led to a drop in the exchange rates of the Guyanese dollar by 18 per cent with respect to the US dollar and this, plus tax increases and removal of subsidies, led to a decline in purchasing power nearly 30 per cent. Unemployment shows a sharp increase. This year, 6,000 workers are dismissed from the government service. An estimated 4,000 more have lost work due to the closure of factories and other establishments.

To bring the country closer to a solution of its problems, the Congress put forward a programme of 12 points. Heading the list is the restoration of democracy, which is fundamental for economic recovery. The party's proposals also call for an end to political and racial discrimination; a planned economy with simultaneous emphasis on agriculture and industry; resistance to denationalisation in any form; preferential treatment to patriotic small and medium businessmen; suspension of debt and compensation payments to foreign creditors; establishment of an all-party committee to monitor imports and distribution of commodities; diversification of foreign economic relations by strengthening links with the socialist countries and other democratic states; a reduction of the large and costly standing army; the formation of a genuine people's militia. We must staunchly defend and ably publicise the idea of scientific socialism and reveal the utopian and petty-bourgeois character of the concept of 'cooperative socialism' adopted by the PNC. The chief task is to prevent capitalism from becoming the dominant sector and defeat attempts aimed at moving Guyana further on a capitalist course.

An important topic of the Congress was that of unity among progressive and revolutionary forces. The attempts in 1978 to bring them together in a National Patriotic Front produced no tangible results but the concept of such a front has had considerable influence among the public. Our party's thesis 'Winner does not take all'² has had a salutary effect, since there is hardly any doubt that in any fair elections the PPP will win the majority. The three elections held before were won by the PNC as a result of rigging. The Report emphasised that real unity would not be achieved by superficial deals. It must be established on the basis of principles and can only come from struggle for common objectives.

The task set for the coming period is to step up political education in all factories, offices and schools. The PPP has to arm the workers with its alternative solutions to the crisis. The trade unions must defend the workers' rights more effectively. The Congress called on the party to work among farmers, defend their interests and resist the growth of large-scale capitalist agriculture at the expense of small farmers.

Having examined the domestic political situation, the Congress came to the following conclusion: to coalesce all progressive and revolutionary forces and strive for a change in the existing social order on the basis of the principles of democracy, anti-imperialism and a socialist orientation. We must work among all sections of the population, telling them what is needed for the formation of a national patriotic front and showing them the place and role of these sections in the proposed alliance. It is important to conduct a permanent dialogue with mass organisations, societies and clubs, and to win them over to our side. In the case of organisations headed by reactionary leaders we must mobilise the rank and file to fight for their removal. Every effort must be made to heighten the militancy of the masses and achieve successes in every sector, whether large or small.

The Congress made a comprehensive analysis of the international situation, devoting special attention to the Caribbean area. It placed emphasis on the demands for an end to imperialist interference in El Salvador and US intrigues against Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada and Surinam. There was a strong expression of the deepest concern at the 'spectre of nuclear war which has been raised and continuously projected by the United States'. 'There is no other issue which is more important than the preservation of peace in the world,' the Report noted. There is no alternative except that of death and destruction of all living things on our planet. Yet President

Reagan and his Administration speak and behave as if nuclear war is an acceptable means of decimating the Soviet Union and perhaps much of mankind as well as for the purpose of maintaining the ability for the US to continue to exploit and plunder the resources and riches of other countries.'

The Central Committee of the PPP decided to set up a special party committee to mobilise Guyanese to resist the war menace and champion peace. 'We join hands with all peace-loving forces the world over in demanding of imperialism an end to the arms race, meaningful negotiations with the Soviet Union, a return to detente and a permanent state of peace on earth. We say no to nuclear holocaust.'

The 21st Congress was attended by more women delegates than earlier congresses and the delegates' average age—30 years—was lower than before. All those present at the Congress agreed that it was one of the best congresses ever held. There was evidence of greater discipline, enthusiasm and ideological progress.

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Immediately following the 21st Congress, a Consultative Meeting of 11 Caribbean Communist, Workers' and Revolutionary Democratic Parties and Organisations was held. It examined the general situation in the region and heard reports of the most recent developments. The final document issued after the meeting demanded the complete decolonisation of the region, expressed solidarity for the revolutions of Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada and Surinam and condemned Reagan's so-called Caribbean Basin Initiative³ as inimical to the interests of the Caribbean peoples. The meeting passed a special solidarity resolution on Grenada. The participants reaffirmed their resolve to fight for world peace and disarmament and for the transformation of the Caribbean into a zone of peace.

¹ *Something to Remember*. The report of the International Team of Observers at the Elections in Guyana, December 1980. British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, House of Commons, London, 1980, p. 28.

² See Clement Rohee, 'Our Strength Is the People'. *WMR*, December 1981.

³ A promise of 'aid' to Caribbean countries made by President Reagan last February. He attached to this 'aid', for all that it would be insignificant, strings injuring the national sovereignty of the recipients.—*Ed.*

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TUNISIA: THE PARTY AFTER LEGALISATION A Political Report

Yuri Potyomkin – Staff member

ON ARRIVING in a country where you had not been for ten years, you are bound to notice something new. In Tunisia I discovered quite a few new phenomena that are both significant and contradictory. The numerous offices of domestic and foreign banks may be said to symbolise a switch from the 'cooperative socialism' of the sixties to the 'liberalism' of the seventies.¹ Impressive villas adjoining the famous ruins of Carthage give an idea of the life of the nouveaux riches, which contrasts with that of, say, the 'ordinary' people of the south-western outskirts of the Tunisian capital.

On familiarising yourself with public life, you are struck by certain changes in the political sphere as well. The trade union movement has won autonomy and actually defends the interests of labour. The communist party has been legalised. Opposition newspapers are published, if at forcedly irregular intervals.