

THE TROUBLE IN  
SURINAME, 1975-1993

Edward M. Dew

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**for Anke**



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# Preface

Not long ago, one of my friends said the problem with my work is that it is on a country that is "too far off the screen" of international importance. He suggested I do work on a place that is more relevant and pivotal, like Guatemala. It may not be surprising to learn that he was a businessman, not an academic. But sometimes academics, too, cluster like honeybees around what appear to be the "relevant and pivotal" subjects for research. Yet, as I hope this book will demonstrate, a subject that is "off the screen" can sometimes yield valuable lessons for everyone.

Suriname is classified by geographers, historians, and social scientists as a Caribbean country. Yet it is usually not shown on maps of the Caribbean. The Caribbean Sea, from the Yucatan Peninsula on the west to the Leeward and Windward Islands of the Caribbean archipelago on the east, and from the Greater Antilles on the north to the coast of Venezuela on the south, touches countries, like Venezuela and Mexico, that are not considered Caribbean, and misses a number that are: Bermuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, French Guiana, and Suriname. Of these, the last three are the furthest removed, located on the South American continent. They are also the least visited—having no beaches, they can lure only the most adventurous vacationers, those interested in the beauties of a lush jungle, the riches of a complex, multicultural society, or what sardonically the Nicaraguans once called *politurismo*, the peculiar thrill of seeing a society destroyed from within and without in a high-stakes political conflict.

But perhaps this is where Suriname's recent history has the most to offer us. The political conflicts since the mid-1970s in Suriname have

surprising reverberations and applications. As a professor of comparative and international politics, my attention is drawn to conflicts in many parts of the world and at various levels, as national politics affects regional or global politics, and vice versa. Suriname may be "off the screen" of the world's attention, but the variety of troubles that it has endured in these years suggests parallels with the former Soviet Union, Bosnia, South Africa, Nigeria, Liberia, Lebanon, Burma, Sri Lanka, Canada, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Nicaragua, and anywhere else that one finds (1) multiethnic societies and the contentious balancing of power, (2) military coups and the painful process of redemocratization, (3) ethnically inspired guerrilla warfare abetted by outside support and involving terrible human rights violations, and, last but not least, (4) economic collapse.

Suriname may be "off the screen" of public attention, but it has excited the scrutiny of a wide array of governments. The Netherlands, its former colonial power, follows its affairs so closely that it records them under "domestic news" in its newspapers. The United States, where Suriname's bauxite, alumina, and aluminum are marketed, kibitzes warily over the shoulders of both Suriname and The Netherlands. France (governing its Overseas Department of Guyane) to the east and independent Guyana to the west are both affected by cross-border affairs—most recently, they have involved guns and mercenaries moving across the porous border from Guyane and goods smuggled into, and guest workers from, Guyana. Brazil took a sharp and apparently abiding interest in its northern neighbor in the 1980s, when revolution in Suriname threatened to put Cubans and Libyans on the border. Cuba and Libya indeed got involved in Suriname's affairs, if only briefly. Japanese and Korean shrimpers operate off the coast, and Japanese-sponsored lumbering is beginning. Multilateral bodies are also involved: the European Economic Community, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the Organization of American States, the Pan American Health Organization.

My earlier work on Suriname<sup>1</sup> was focused on domestic politics, with special attention to the ethnic nature of political conflict and electoral contestation. The study permitted me to make a modest contribution to the rich, but controversial, literature on power-sharing in a multiethnic society. By the time Suriname achieved independence in 1975—the concluding event in that study and the opening one in this—power-sharing had been almost totally abandoned. As this is written, ethnic power-sharing is back in business. But at what a price! The eighteen years covered in this study take the reader through a crippling experience of ethnic polarization, an unexpected coup by young officers, an experiment in Cuban- or Grenadan-style revolution, a dramatic confrontation ending in a massacre, guerrilla war, and economic implosion. Contemplation of these events, their origins, and their consequences should be of use both to students of Suriname's recent past and to those adding to their more general knowledge of Third World history in

these troubled times.

**NOTE**

1. *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam: Ethnicity and Politics in a Plural Society* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978).



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Obviously, any study that relies heavily upon newspapers for its data owes its greatest debt to the journalists whose work generates the news. Unfortunately, not all are known to me, though many of the anonymous wire service and "our correspondent" stories may have come from those I am about to name. Special thanks to Hans Buddingh', a man of formidable contacts and insights, and to Leo Morpurgo, editor of *De Ware Tijd*, who manages to keep his critical thinking and imagination open in even the most depressing of times. Nita Ramcharan, of the same paper, helped me with background information on several events in the 1980s. At an earlier stage of this project, I was assisted by journalists Sig Wolf and Cyriel Karg. Peter Sanches, of Radio Paramaribo (RAPAR), was an invaluable source of information and encouragement. Don Bohning, of the *Miami Herald*, shared a great deal of information at an earlier stage of the project; while, more recently, Howard French, of the *New York Times*, has given me the benefit of his ideas while considering some of my own. Much of the material collected from these sources (portions of Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six, and Eight) appeared in the *Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record*, vols. I-IV, Jack Hopkins, ed., vols. V-VI, Abraham

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On the home front, I have family debts of various kinds. My sister-in-law, Jaike van Dijk, provided warm hospitality both in Curacao (in 1976 and 1983) and in Suriname (1987 and 1990). She and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jan van Dijk, of Koudum, Friesland, clipped their local papers assiduously for my benefit, and I am in their debt in many ways.

Finally, it should be noted that my wife, Anke, is responsible for my getting interested in Suriname in the first place. After tours of study and work in Peru and Mexico in the 1960s, I was eager to learn about yet another society, and Anke's suggestion was Suriname—a place she had always wanted to visit and where her sister (Jaike) was just starting a new job. Her help since that fateful decision has been extensive—with language, culture, her own research work, and general historical background. I've tried my best with this project to free her of the responsibilities that she accepted in my earlier book, but it's not been easy. Her aid and support have been inescapable...thank heavens!



THE TROUBLE IN  
SURINAME, 1975-1993



# 1

## The Difficult Flowering of Suriname

I am aware that many of my contemporaries maintain that nations are never their own masters here below, and that they necessarily obey some insurmountable and unintelligent power, arising from anterior events, from their race, or from the soil and climate of their country. Such principles are false and cowardly; such principles can never produce aught but feeble men and pusillanimous nations.

Alexis de Tocqueville  
*Democracy in America*

Until jolted by the military coup of 1980, Suriname appeared to offer a fairly unusual case of an ethnically plural society (1) preserving a healthy democratic structure and (2) achieving steady and substantial development without serious violence or structural breakdown. To a large extent, credit for these accomplishments was given to the practice of consociationalism (i.e., government by a multiparty, multiethnic, "elite cartel"<sup>1</sup>). The success of consociationalism in Suriname seemed to set it apart from other ethnically plural societies in the Caribbean. Yet, in the final years leading to independence, Suriname operated without a consociational arrangement among its principal parties. The result was a situation of ethnic polarization not unlike that existing in Guyana or Trinidad. In this chapter, we shall try to explain why independence—the most interethnically controversial political reform—was achieved without systemic breakdown.

### ETHNICITY AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Suriname's ethnic groups had already acquired much of their present

political organization before the country's experiment with self-government, instituted de facto in 1948 and formally ratified under the Dutch tripartite Kingdom Statute of 1954.<sup>2</sup> Creoles were organized into the largely Protestant *Nationale Partij Suriname* (NPS) and the smaller, Catholic *Progressieve Surinaamse Volkspartij* (PSV) in the late 1940s. Sorting out the lines of affiliation among Javanese and Hindustanis took longer, given various religious schisms and the failed effort to unite Muslims from both groups. By the end of the decade, Hindustanis (from the Indian subcontinent) rallied together in the *Verenigde Hindostaanse Partij* (VHP) and Javanese (from the Dutch East Indies) rallied to the *Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia* (KTPI). New parties generally emerged out of these basic groups: the conservative *Surinaamse Democratische Partij* (SDP) and the *Progressieve Nationale Partij* (PNP) broke from the NPS in 1955 and 1966, respectively; the *Actie Groep* (AG) from the VHP in 1961; and the *Sarekat Rakjat Indonesia* (SRI) from the KTPI in 1965. The *Partij van de Nationalistische Republiek* (PNR) was the only major exception. Like some of the parties that would emerge in the 1970s, it championed radical reform, national independence, and the recovery of Creole culture and language (Sranantongo).

Although the smaller ethnic parties played important roles in some governments,<sup>3</sup> the dominant parties are still, as they were in the late 1940s, the NPS, VHP, and KTPI. These three, together with the smaller parties, have generally directed their election appeals and clientage services exclusively to members of their ethnic constituencies.<sup>4</sup> In return, as far as can be inferred from the correlation of voting and census figures (see Table 1.1), political support for these parties followed the country's ethnic proportions. (Note that "Creoles" drew better, and "Others" less well, than their proportions in the census. This represents the greater tendency of members of the other groups to throw in their lot with the Creoles who successfully conveyed the idea that *they* were the original Surinamers, the ones who could serve the national interest.)

Even with the strong vote that Creole parties received, they were still not assured of control of the government. But Suriname's ethnically based parties reduced the possibilities for interethnic conflict by agreeing to consociational governing coalitions. These arrangements were usually clear to voters before elections, minimizing the possibility of intercommunal violence during campaigns. Thanks to skillful leadership of Johan Adolf Pengel of the Creoles and his Hindustani counterpart, Jaggernath Lachmon, Suriname's politics were stabilized between 1958 and 1966 by a Creole-Hindustani coalition (of the NPS and VHP), with smaller parties marginally allied with the coalition or relegated to the opposition. In general, parties tried to offer a patron-client relationship to their targeted voters; and the principal parties filled the bureaucracy with their followers, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, strains in the VHP and NPS *verbroedering* (brotherhood)

coalition occurred in the 1960s as each tried to maintain, or enhance, their job-giving capacities in the face of reduced Dutch subsidies. Smaller ethnic parties took advantage of this tension by charging coalition partners of their own ethnic group of selling them out, and the most heated controversies in elections involved intra- rather than interethnic rivalry. Finally, a preelection alliance between the VHP and NPS was broken following the 1966 elections (the NPS taking the smaller AG as a government partner), with a subsequent rise in interethnic tensions as the VHP lost its access to patronage. When the *verbroedering* alliance was severed, the smaller Creole and Hindustani parties had a chance for more significant political roles—quite beyond their actual voting strength (see Table 1.2). Consociationalism continued, but the exclusion of a major party from the government (the VHP being out from 1967 to 1969, and the NPS from 1969 to 1973) subjected the governing alliances to much greater, and nastier, opposition than had previously been the case.

If autonomy within the Kingdom of The Netherlands had been expected to generate a more diversified and locally controlled economic development, Surinamers must have been sorely disappointed by the late 1960s. Aside from addition of a modest shrimping industry, the economy's principal growth after 1948 came in fields that were already in operation: mechanized rice production at the Stichting Machinale Landbouw (Foundation for Mechanized Agriculture) in Wageningen, reorientation of plantation agriculture toward citrus and banana production, and refining of alumina and aluminum by Suralco (the Alcoa subsidiary) at Paranam.<sup>5</sup>

The latter was, perhaps, the most dramatic economic development. Coming early in the period of self-government, the Brokopondo Agreement (1957) between Suriname and Alcoa, besides establishing a joint venture between the two parties, ultimately involved construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Suriname River to provide the enormous amount of energy needed to transform bauxite into aluminum ingots. Transferring this costly, but lucrative, elaboration stage to a Third World country was unprecedented in the industry, and enough electrical power would be left over to benefit both domestic and industrial consumers. The Alcoa commitment was clearly a landmark in Suriname's development—and in the relations between multinational corporations and the Third World. Yet Suriname's political stability, skilled labor force, and the votes of confidence from The Hague and Pittsburgh (Alcoa's headquarters) could not offset the country's small size and isolation from the world's commercial centers. Despite the downstream availability of finished aluminum and cheap electricity, Suriname's ability to attract new investments was negligible.

Unfortunately, the only area of job growth thus turned out to be government service. In its defense, one may say that a large share of public expenditure was devoted to infrastructural development.<sup>6</sup> The steady growth

**TABLE 1.1**  
**ESTIMATED VOTE ON NATIONAL LIST, BY ETHNIC PARTIES, 1963,**  
**1967, 1969, 1973; AND CENSUS RESULTS BY ETHNIC GROUPS, 1964,**  
**1972**

Year	Creole		Hindustani		Javanese		Other
1963	NPS	20,354	VHP	15,456	KTPI	7,323	1,525 <sup>a</sup>
Election	SDP	12,000 <sup>b</sup>	AG	11,500 <sup>b</sup>	Other	1,193 <sup>c</sup>	
	PSV	3,916	Other	6,000 <sup>d</sup>			
	PNR	3,140					
	Other	1,500 <sup>e</sup>					
Estimated							
Total		41,000		33,000		8,516	1,525
		48.8%		39.3%		10.1%	1.8%
<hr/>							
1964							
Census		114,961		112,633		48,463	48,154
		35.4%		34.7%		14.9%	15.0%
<hr/>							
1967	NPS	30,135	VHP	20,725	KTPI	5,825	None
Election	PNP	8,506	AG	11,614	SRI	3,064	
	PNR	2,396	Other	889 <sup>f</sup>			
	PSV	5,373					
	SDP	7,242					
Total		53,652		33,228		8,889	
		56.0%		34.7%		9.3%	
<hr/>							
1969	NPS	26,416	VHP-AG	33,464	KTPI	5,500 <sup>g</sup>	2,000 <sup>g</sup>
Election	PNP	9,000 <sup>g</sup>	Other	1,188 <sup>h</sup>	SRI	3,189	
	PSV	5,500 <sup>g</sup>					
	PNR	7,377					
	SDP	1,433					
Estimated							
Total		50,000		34,652		8,500	2,000
		52.5%		36.4%		8.9%	2.1%
<hr/>							
1971							
Census		118,483		142,349		58,863	65,208
		30.8%		37.0%		15.3%	16.9%

1973	NPS	35,000 <sup>i</sup>	VHP-AG	42,000 <sup>j</sup>	KTPI	10,000 <sup>i</sup>	5,215 <sup>k</sup>
Election	PNR	10,000 <sup>i</sup>	Other	3,749 <sup>l</sup>	SRI	4,000 <sup>j</sup>	
	PSV	6,500 <sup>i</sup>					
	PNP	3,908					
	Other	2,500 <sup>m</sup>					
	Estimated						
	Total	58,000	45,500	14,000	5,215		
		47.3%	37.1%	11.4%	4.2%		

## NOTES:

a. The Amerindian *Verenigde Indiaanse Partij*.

b. The SDP and AG were allied. Vote tallies estimated on basis of preceding (1958) vote of SDP and subsequent (1967) vote of AG. Note that the AG did not exist in 1958.

c. The *Kerngroep* (Core Group), active in this election only.

d. Two parties, *Nickerie Onafhankelijke Partij* (Nickerie Independent Party) and *Partij van de Landbouw* (Agriculture Party). The latter allied with the VHP in 1967.

e. Three small parties, none active before or since.

f. One small party that ran only in this election.

g. Votes for the PNP-bloc (PNP, PSV, KTPI, and *Progressieve BosNeger Partij* (Progressive Bush Negro Party, PBNP) are estimated according to the prior voting appeal of the PNP, PSV, and KTPI. Because of public criticism among Javanese for the KTPI's alliance with these parties, I have estimated the KTPI as losing some votes. The PBNP vote is estimated from the votes for the PNP-bloc in areas exclusively populated by Bush Negroes.

h. One small party that ran only in this election.

i. Votes for the NPK parties (NPS, PSV, PNR, and KTPI) are based on earlier trends. I have rated the KTPI's vote on the basis of observation and interviews.

j. Votes for the VHP-bloc parties (VHP-AG, SRI, and PBNP) are based on earlier trends.

k. These included the PBNP (allied with the VHP), the *Bosnegers Eenheid Partij* (Bush Negro Unity Party, BEP, a coalition of Bush Negroes and urban Creole intellectuals) and a peculiar cross-ethnic coalition party of Chinese merchants and (mostly Creole) women's party.

l. Two small parties, the AG '73 and *Hindostaanse Progressieve Partij* (Hindustani Progressive Party, HPP).

m. In addition to the votes that I estimate to have been won by Creole alliance partners in the Chinese-Women's front and the BEP (note k above), there were two other parties in this category, a conservative successor to the SDP, and the Communist *Demokratische Volksfront* (Democratic People's Front, DVF).

of the public sector in this period was also a function of the political contest within and among ethnic parties scrambling for patronage and other benefits. Those fortunate enough to be taken into government service were neither used effectively nor paid very well. As Chin and Buddingh' point out, "Civil servants' wages...traditionally lag far behind those in the private sector. The lowest-level civil servants in particular receive low wages, and attempt to supplement their incomes through unofficial activities."<sup>7</sup> These "activities," whether done at the expense, or in the guise, of their duties, invariably corrupted the public's image of politics. They also eroded the consociational working relationship between Creoles and Hindustanis. Chin and Buddingh' continue:

With twice as many ministerial posts as the VHP, the NPS had a strikingly dominant position in the cabinet [between 1958 and 1967]. By means of political patronage, both parties provided their supporters with civil service jobs, which in a certain sense promoted the emancipation of the rank and file. The Creoles [however] were most strongly represented in the civil service apparatus. According to the 1964 census, 63 per cent of the government posts were occupied by Creoles, with the Hindustanis occupying barely 20 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

The collapse of the NPS-VHP alliance in 1967 was occasioned by a combination of factors reflecting these conditions *and* the thwarted economic expectations in the 1960s. VHP pressures for more Cabinet positions (and patronage possibilities), combined with Dutch pressure to bring civil service expansion under control, prompted the NPS leader Pengel to invite the smaller Hindustani AG into his next government, cutting the ties to his old ally, Lachmon. This move amazed many in the Creole and Hindustani groups—the AG had drawn support for its claims that the VHP was "selling Hindustanis out." How could Pengel work with them, and vice versa? But Pengel gambled that he would lose fewer spoils to this smaller group, and he seems to have been correct.

In the ethnically tense atmosphere of the times, the AG was immediately ostracized within the Hindustani community. The same thing occurred two years later, in 1969, when the VHP dislodged the NPS from power with the help of a small Creole ally, the PNP. The latter quickly came under such fierce attack by followers of the NPS that not a single candidate won in the next elections (1973).<sup>9</sup>

Condemning ethnically or ideologically similar partners in a power-sharing coalition for selling out their group is a phenomenon Giovanni Sartori refers to as "outbidding."<sup>10</sup> It is a strategy fraught with peril, as the two small alliance partners found out. As the larger ethnic parties in turn outbid their small rivals, the effect was a maximal polarization.

In 1973, even the practice of *token* consociationalism (i.e., the NPS with the AG, the VHP with the PNP) received a major setback when only two of

the nine predominantly ethnic party slates were able to win any seats in Suriname's Staten (legislature). The winning bloc, the Nationale Partij Kombinatie (NPK, an alliance comprising the NPS, PNR, PSV, and KTPI), gathered twenty-two seats, while the VHP bloc (including the VHP, remnants of the AG, the SRI, and the tiny Progressieve Bosneger Partij) took the remaining seventeen. Eight other parties that might have engaged in postelectoral alliances, providing some form of crossethnic governing (and/or opposition) coalitions, were denied representation at the polls.<sup>11</sup> Thus the new alignment in the Staten presented a dangerous new phenomenon: no Creoles in the opposition, no Hindustanis in the majority. Consociationalism (if we exclude a token number of Javanese and Bush Negroes on both sides of the aisle) was dead (see Table 1.2).

## THE ROCKY ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

Indications in 1971-72 that The Netherlands would be fully supportive of Surinamese independence produced enthusiastic responses by the NPS and PNR but much greater caution from the VHP and other Asian parties. However, during the 1973 election campaign, discussion of the question of independence was conspicuous for its absence, at least in the public rhetoric of the two main blocs.

It came as a thunderclap, then, on February 15, 1974, when Henck Arron, Minister-President in the new NPK government, announced that Suriname would achieve independence by "ultimo 1975."<sup>12</sup> This announcement was received with anger and defiance by the VHP. No such mandate had been evident in the elections. Had it been, some said, the KTPI's vote might have been much smaller, as would that of the NPS itself! Lachmon insisted upon a national plebiscite.

In the months that followed Arron's declaration, Lachmon and other VHP leaders tried every means at their disposal to force reconsideration of the issue. Mass rallies were organized and fears were aroused that Suriname might follow the pattern of neighboring Guyana, where Hindustanis were subjected to the arbitrary and tyrannous rule of Creoles. Although Hindustanis were a minority in this complex society, they were the largest minority, and their exclusion from the government for the first time since 1955 was easily imagined for years into the distant future. Emigration to The Netherlands by all groups, but especially by Hindustanis, rose precipitously.<sup>13</sup>

Rather than seeking conciliation between these two largest political blocs, Arron denounced Lachmon and the VHP for sedition and inciting ethnic polarization, while proceeding with his announced timetable of talks with the Dutch. The latter, confronted with growing popular resentment against Surinamese immigration and eager to improve relations with the Third World

TABLE 1.2  
NATIONAL LIST VOTING, BY PARTIES, 1963, 1967, 1969, 1973

ELECTION	PNR	NPS	PSV	KTPI	PNP	PBNP	SRI	VHP	AG	SDP	OTHERS
1963											
Votes	3,140	20,354	3,916	7,323	-	-	-	15,456	---	23,612	10,039
Seats won	0	<u>14</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>				<u>8</u>		4	<u>2</u> <sup>2</sup>
1967	2,396	30,135	5,373	5,825	8,506	-	3,064	20,725	11,614	7,242	889 <sup>3</sup>
Votes											
Seats won	0	<u>17</u>	0	0	3		2 <sup>4</sup>	11	<u>4</u>	2	0
1969	7,377	26,416	---	22,244	---	---	3,189	---	33,464	---	1,288 <sup>5</sup>
Votes											
Seats won	1	12	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>			<u>2</u>	<u>17</u>	0	0	0
1973	---	61,760	---	3,908	---	---	47,931	---	334	---	8,838 <sup>6</sup>
Votes											
Seats won		<u>22</u>		0			17		0		0

NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Underlined numbers indicate the majority bloc. The NPS and PSV ran a joint ticket in Paramaribo, winning 6 and 4 seats, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Six parties. The *Nickerie Onafhankelijk Partij* (a district party in Nickerie) won both seats there.

<sup>3</sup> One party.

<sup>4</sup> The SRI was able to win seats in 1967 and 1969 by running joint lists with the VHP in two rural districts.

<sup>5</sup> Two parties.

<sup>6</sup> Five parties.

by ending their colonial responsibilities, turned a cold ear to Lachmon's entreaties and fully cooperated with Arron.<sup>14</sup>

As the pace toward independence quickened, Lachmon demanded dual nationality for all Surinamers (safeguarding their Dutch citizenship and continued ability to emigrate to Holland after independence) and the resolution of long-standing border disputes with Guyana and French Guiana. Moreover, he insisted that a new constitution be adopted before independence—one that would guarantee fundamental human rights, preserve the existing electoral system (or, preferably, change it from partial to full proportional representation<sup>15</sup>), safeguard private investments, and assure an apolitical character of the new Surinamese army. The latter could be achieved, said Lachmon, only if it were to be a *weerspiegeling* (reflection) of the population on an ethnic basis.<sup>16</sup>

These constitutional demands provided both the NPK and the Dutch with the biggest problem, as any revisions of the present constitution would require a two-thirds majority approval in the Staten, and the NPK was four votes short of this requirement. Clearly, revisions would have to be made (or a wholly new constitution adopted) because of the presence of kingdom-related language and procedures in the existing document. In January 1975, Arron appointed a nonpartisan, multiethnic commission of legal experts to begin work on a new constitution. His assurances that this work would be completed in advance of the independence date (November 25, 1975) were not very convincing to the opposition.

In the meantime, the rallies and demonstrations organized by the VHP intensified. In May, during the visit to Suriname of Dutch Premier Joop den Uyl and his leading advisers, a wave of arson swept Paramaribo, destroying a number of government buildings (including the passport office) and part of the commercial area. On one occasion, Hindustanis and Creoles engaged in a rock-throwing spree, injuring dozens on both sides. At this juncture, more conservative Creoles in the NPS began to press Arron to reconcile his differences with Lachmon, possibly going so far as to form a broad-front coalition with the VHP to see Suriname through to independence. Though a meeting was finally arranged between top leaders of the NPK and VHP, it produced no agreements, and Arron rejected the coalition idea out of hand.

In August 1975, two NPS legislators, a Creole and a Chinese, crossed to the opposition. Joining a Javanese NPS member who had earlier defected, this tipped the balance of power in the Staten to the VHP's advantage. But then the Chinese defector disappeared, and the Staten deadlocked at 19-19. This was still sufficient to prevent any business from being conducted, and from August to October the Staten was paralyzed.

Nevertheless, the Dutch Parliament went ahead with its debate to terminate Suriname's participation in the kingdom in late October, and government and opposition, unwilling to use their forum in Paramaribo,

journeyed to The Hague to present their case before the Parliament. On the eve of this debate, a leading member of the VHP, George Hindorie, broke ranks and pledged to provide the NPK a quorum for the subsequent Staten debates. Despite the deeply emotional, and clearly ethnic, conflict rehearsed before them, the Dutch Parliament overwhelmingly ratified Suriname's independence, and the Surinamese legislators flew back to face their own moment of truth.

Despite the loss of Hindorie, Lachmon stubbornly persisted in his demands regarding the representative composition of the army, safeguards against expropriation of private enterprises (two-thirds approval of the legislature should be required), and elections (including a demand for new elections within five months of independence, under an independent electoral authority and according to proportional representation [PR]). The VHP's approval of the new constitution by the necessary two-thirds majority would be conditioned on NPK acceptance of these demands.

The constitution, prepared by the independent commission (and published in August 1975) borrowed heavily from the existing *Staatsregeling* (constitution, in effect since 1950). The government reviewed the commission's work and made few changes. As finally submitted to the Staten in November, it contained none of the features demanded by the VHP.

Debate was tense and unyielding throughout the first day. But on the second, Arron made an emotional appeal to Lachmon for solidarity and support, and the two embraced on the floor of the Staten, later meeting privately to work out their disagreements. In the compromise they reached, Arron stated new elections would be held within eight months of independence and promised to establish a mixed commission to study the feasibility of introducing nationwide PR, revise the constitution to establish an independent electoral authority, and provide new language to describe the intended composition and apolitical character of the military.

The exclusion of these issues from the constitution (at least at this time) was accepted reluctantly in the name of national unity. Lachmon even went so far as to drop his demand for the private investment safeguards.<sup>17</sup> Leo Morpurgo, editor of Suriname's leading newspaper, *De Ware Tijd*, though often finding much to criticize in Lachmon's political behavior, credits him with a nonviolent, Gandhian philosophy. Why, then, had he allowed the polarized struggle over independence to come so near to civil war? Morpurgo's explanation is that young Hindustani firebrands would have shoved him aside if he hadn't taken the hardest possible line against the Arron government.<sup>18</sup> Given the earlier mobilization of Hindustani and Creole voters against "deviant" (collaborationist) parties, this seems quite reasonable. "Outbidding," the intraethnic rivalry to establish which leader can best maximize benefits to the group, was still a possibility—if not between ethnic parties, then within the VHP itself.

The rapid and dramatic resolution of the two-year-long independence conflict produced measurable relief in both The Netherlands and Suriname. The constitution, the bill terminating the Kingdom Statute, and several other related bills passed swiftly through debate, winning unanimous approval. Surinamers at home and abroad (the latter group swollen to a third of the total population) could celebrate Independence Day, November 25, with a measure of optimism. Such optimism may not have been warranted.

## SOURCES OF STABILITY

In comparison with many societies in the Caribbean, and the Third World in general, Suriname had enjoyed a fairly stable and prosperous political development up to the eve of independence. Though ethnically divided, its population was so heterogeneous that it created a complex balance of power that virtually necessitated power-sharing. It was a small society that could produce a lower and more manageable decision-making burden,<sup>19</sup> together with wide opportunity for contacts—and pressures—across ethnic boundaries. Perceptions of resource capabilities were positive. Bauxite, and its elaboration, had given Suriname an unusually high GNP per capita for the Caribbean (\$880 at the time of independence<sup>20</sup>), and the oil embargo of the early 1970s had led many to think that this lighter metal was the wave of the future.

Suriname had enjoyed a fairly good relationship with its motherland, The Netherlands—one that would become even more lucrative after independence. The high degree of contact with Dutch society, especially at the middle- and upper-class levels in Suriname, assured that many Dutch political predispositions were internalized. Surinamers were pressed by their schools, churches, and colonial officials to extend recognition and value to the cultural traditions of the country's different ethnic groups and to encourage tolerance and understanding among them.

Finally, Suriname was graced by being both ahead of and behind the times in terms of political developments in plural societies. Compared with other Caribbean societies, its major outbreaks of violence belonged to past centuries,<sup>21</sup> while the immediate past was marked with precocious learning from the Dutch experience and successful experimentation with accommodation as a means for resolving interethnic conflict. In another sense, Suriname was fortunately far enough behind other plural societies—in terms of their modernizing disturbances—that they could have a sobering demonstration effect on Suriname's political leaders. In particular, the violence in Guyana in the 1960s, where Creole-East Indian cooperation had collapsed, was widely reported (especially through the firsthand accounts of refugees from the communal violence).<sup>22</sup>

Such events could also be disruptively contagious. When confronted with

severe conflict in a society similar to one's own, one could easily be tempted into a worst-case analysis of one's own possibilities. Then a self-fulfilling prophecy might take place in which fearful defensiveness engenders suspicion and hostile reactions.

The other factors contributing to stability also had the capacity to engender instability as well. A heterogeneous society is a fissiparous one—fraught with possibilities for segmentation and factionalism. A determined effort by one ethnic group to combat another in such a multipolar society might actually polarize that society, if it fragmented enough of the third parties standing between them—in this case, the Javanese, Bush Negroes, Chinese, and others. A small size, too, offers no guarantees that mixed patterns of residence, schooling, and employment, will produce a predominance of moderating cross-pressures as opposed to the political exacerbation of cumulative cleavages. In particular, the perceived rivalry between members of several groups for civil service positions and entry into professions could make bitter rivals of the closest neighbors or classmates.

Socialization through the Dutch influence was also a double-edged sword. In particular, the highly politicized youth culture of The Netherlands had its reverberations in Suriname—both through Surinamers who had studied at Dutch universities in the 1960s and 1970s, and those at home who had contact with the Surinamese returnees. As we shall see, Suriname's politics was affected by a cleavage different from those that had gone before: a generational revolt against the old parties, the Dutch connections, and the old institutions of society. This cleavage crosscut the ethnic ones, adding to the system's complexity.

Perhaps the most serious misperception held by many observers, including this author, about the possible flowering of Suriname was in regard to its resources. Bauxite and aluminum might be the wave of the future in automotive and aircraft constructions, but efforts to form a bauxite cartel to safeguard Caribbean income from this mineral merely led to the development of cheap new reserves in other parts of the world. Moreover, the Dutch connection was not a guarantee that development monies would be used wisely, or that they would flow indefinitely.

In short, Suriname plunged into independence with a mixture of hope and fear. The future didn't appear that bleak in 1975. But, to paraphrase the old gospel song, nobody knew the troubles they'd see....

## NOTES

1. See Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21 (Jan. 1969): 207-25. For earlier analyses of Suriname in these terms, see Edward Dew, "Surinam: The Test of Consociationalism," *Plural Societies* 3, no.4 (Autumn 1972):

35-56; and R. Hoppe, "Het politieke systeem van Suriname: Elite-kartel democratie," *Acta Politica* 11, no. 2 (Apr. 1976): 145-77.

2. On the Statute of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, see Albert L. Gastmann, *The Politics of Surinam and The Netherlands Antilles* (Rio Piedras: University of Puerto Rico, 1968). Peter Meel has written a doctoral dissertation describing the political negotiations that gave rise to the tripartite Kingdom (University of Groningen, forthcoming).

3. For the Creoles, these included the SDP and PSV in 1955-58; PSV in 1958-63 and again in 1969-73, 1973,77, and 1977-80; SDP in 1966-69; PNP in 1969-73, and PNR in 1973-77; the Hindustani AG shared power in 1966-69; and the Indonesian SRI in 1969-73.

4. Despite its Creole cultural nationalism, the PNR devoted much of its energy to organizing and serving other ethnic groups through the confederation of labor unions (C-47) that it organized in the late 1960s. Ironically, this did not seem to pay off at the polls for the PNR, but the C-47's services to these groups—and their support for the C-47 in turn—has continued just the same.

5. Stan Verschuuren, *Suriname: Geschiedenis in Hoofdpijnen* (Utrecht: H & S Uitgevers, 1987), 96-100.

6. Anna Maria Janssen, *Suriname: Ontwikkelingland in het Caraïbisch Gebied* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUA, 1986), 101-108.

7. Henk E. Chin and Hans Buddingh', *Surinam: Politics, Economics and Society* (London and New York: Frances Pinter, 1987), 75.

8. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

9. For more details of this "clipped-wing flying" by the NPS and VHP, see Dew, *The Difficult Flowering...*, ch. 6.

10. Giovanni Sartori, "European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism," in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, eds., *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1966), 158.

11. Most significant among these were the Creole PNP attempting to remain a VHP partner and the new *Hindostaanse Progressieve Partij* (Progressive Hindustani Party) as a potential ally of the NPK.

12. *Regeringsverklaring* (Paramaribo), Feb. 15, 1974.

13. By November 1975, according to official estimates, there were approximately 120,000 Surinamers in The Netherlands, up from 57,000 reported in the 1971 Census. See Chin and Buddingh', 30.

14. Verschuuren, 104-05. See also Edward Dew, "The Draining of Surinam," *Caribbean Review* 5, no. 4 (Fall 1973); 8-15; and "Anti-Consociationalism and Independence in Surinam," *Boletín de estudios latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 23 (Dec. 1976): 3-15.

15. For details of Suriname's changing electoral laws, see C. D. Ooft, *Kort begrip van de staatsinrichting van Suriname*, 4th ed. (Paramaribo: Leo Victor, 1973), 49-69.

16. Dew, *Difficult Flowering...*, ch. 7.

17. The issue of the border disputes with Guyana and French Guiana were evidently viewed as long-term issues and no longer discussed.

18. Interview, Paramaribo, June 12, 1990. Chin and Buddingh' quote Lachmon as saying, "I didn't want to disturb the country's peace. A racial conflict was looming. I could either allow it to escalate or accept the new constitution. As a responsible politician who wanted to do something for his country, I had no choice" (Chin and Buddingh', 31).

19. This is one of several factors mentioned by Arend Lijphart as being conducive to the successful operation of consociationalism. "Consociational Democracy," pp. 216-22.

20. Cited in *Time*, Dec. 22, 1975, 22-23.

21. For an outstanding treatment of earlier upheavals, see Rudolf van Lier, *Samenleving in een grensgebied: Een sociaal-historische studie van Suriname* (Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1971), ch. 6 and 255-84. The book is also available in translation as *Frontier Society: A Social Analysis of the History of Surinam* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

22. For details on the racial disturbances in Guyana, see Thomas J. Spinner, Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945-1983* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984), ch. 6; and Jane Kramer, "Letter from Guyana," *The New Yorker*, Sept. 16, 1974, 100-28.

## *Oude Rotten, Foetoebois, and Ruziemakers*

[I]t would seem that freedom is impossible without diversity and diversity equally impossible without a measure of conflict.... A difference of colour or race makes it easier for us to discharge the bite and venom which is ever present—and dormant only until such time as it is able to find some plausible cause or pretext for action.

Albert Gomes  
*Through a Maze of Colour*

With independence occurring under conditions of ethnic polarization not unlike that existing in neighboring Guyana or Trinidad, it is surprising that Suriname was not plunged into civil war in 1975-76. To some extent, the *verzoening* (reconciliation) that occurred between Arron and Lachmon and their many partisans kept the lid on. But new abuses of power by both sides precipitated a prolonged constitutional crisis that demoralized and distracted everyone. Affairs were allowed to drift. In the military, this would have disastrous consequences. If consociationalism had taken some hard knocks in the last decade before independence, the whole process of representative government and democracy began to lose its legitimacy in the public's eyes in the years immediately following independence. Surely, consociationalism could not be blamed for the failures of the system, though the organization of Suriname's political life around competing ethnic parties *did* have a lot to do with it. But was the institution of parliamentary democracy itself to blame? To fix responsibility for the breakdown of Suriname's democracy, we have to look more closely at the behavior and events that led up to it.

## SURINAME'S IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY

Surinamers have some colorful terms to describe their political actors. Those in the title of this chapter seemed to suggest the underlying dynamics of the immediate postindependence period. An *oude rot* (or *rat*—the two Dutch spellings are possible) is a sly fox or an old hand at his trade, in this case, the business of politics. The term was used to characterize Jaggernath Lachmon (leader of the VHP), Henck Arron (leader of the NPS), and those few others at the top of Suriname's politics (or behind its scenes). A *foetoeboi* (in the local Creole language, *Sranan*) is a dutiful attendant or messenger. It is a demeaning term, suggesting that the individual is a flunky of some more powerful individual. A *ruziemaker* (Dutch for "troublemaker") is quite the opposite—a person looking for a fight. Publicly questioning your own party's leaders is to create a *ruzie* and to ask for trouble. Such daring may get you thrown out of your party—a not infrequent occurrence. Outsiders, for their part, are able to produce a good *ruzie* from time to time, but when pitted against the *oude rotten*, they are usually fated to remain where they are—on the outside.

In a rather crude way, these were the general categories of *dramatis personae* in the public mind in the 1970s. A variety of smaller, usually radical, parties popped up throughout this period, only to beat their heads against the hegemonic walls of ethnic loyalty to the established parties and their *oude rotten*. Making few inroads into the rank and file of those parties, the *ruziemakers* directed their energies to the younger, less committed segment of the electorate. But this was a shrinking pool, given the rising emigration of students and young workers to The Netherlands. Fighting for the same resource, the small parties ended up expending their passion attacking each other rather than the monoliths.

When, on occasion, there was a gesture of interest on the part of the *oude rotten* for a possible alliance, the opportunity merely fed their disputes with one another and threw their membership off balance. With the repeated electoral failure of *ruziemakers* to outbid the *oude rotten*, political commentators began to talk about an emergent two-party system. The Creole NPS, with three small allies (two Creole and one Indonesian), and the Hindustani VHP, with its three allies (Hindustani, Indonesian, and Bush Negro), now seemed on the verge of an amalgamation process producing two fairly permanent parties. Other observers, looking at the savage warfare between the VHP and NPS, lamented the loss of the earlier consociational alliance and worked (unsuccessfully) to restore it.

**BACK TO THE BUSINESS OF CONFLICT**

Photos of President Johan Ferrier, Prime Minister Henck Arron, and Opposition Leader Jaggernath Lachmon in their white morning jackets on the podium of the Independence Day celebrations, November 25, 1975, revealed an exuberant and by no means unfriendly threesome. On Government Square, now dubbed Independence Square, the new national flag was formed for aerial photographs by thousands of students dressed in its bright colors. Crown Princess Beatrix and Prince Claus of The Netherlands, together with Dutch Prime Minister Joop den Uyl and a number of other foreign dignitaries, attended the ceremonies, adding to the excitement of the occasion.

But hardly had the morning jackets come off than Lachmon and Arron were at it again, this time over the latter's Independence Eve promise of early elections. Elections "within eight months" would mean July 1976 at the latest, but Lachmon urged that they should come as early as April, or even March. Arron said nothing. In early February, Lachmon reminded Arron that he had said his word was "holy." By April, Lachmon was warning that "the much-praised easing of tensions within the population is now in danger."

Of course, things had changed rather dramatically since the last elections in 1973. On the one hand, flight to The Netherlands had virtually spiraled out of control in the course of the independence struggle. On the other hand, ethnic *verzoening* between Lachmon and Arron seemingly existed, and foreign aid of unparalleled proportions was about to flow in from The Netherlands. Lachmon had gone there over New Year's, urging Surinamers to come home. The country had "a good constitution," he told a television interviewer, and the coming elections would put a good government in power. Back in Suriname, Parliament Chairman Emile Wijntuin told New Year's celebrants that it was now up to them whether Suriname became "a prosperous land or one of misery, unemployment, and chaos." It was imperative, he said, to put an end to the "*winti waai, lanti sa pai*" ("pass the buck") mentality.<sup>1</sup> This sort of challenge was underlined a few months later when the *Rekenkamer* (Audit Department) presented its annual report, showing the growing incidence of waste and questionable expenditures throughout the government.

Parliamentary debate over this and other matters revealed the souring relation between Arron and Lachmon, even though the latter showed up at Arron's fortieth birthday celebration in April. By the time that talks on the elections were finally held in May, it was too late to hold them within the promised time frame. At least Arron put most of his cards on the table. There was, he said, a need to overhaul the voters lists and to handle the question of who was and was not a Surinamer. Return migration, especially of skilled workers and professionals, should also be pushed hard, and early elections might serve to delay this. The news agency Informa added an even more telling reason: Arron looked forward to the public's adulation at the first

anniversary of the independence.

At the six-month mark toward that date, *De Ware Tijd* noted that there was virtually no remigration taking place, despite the planefuls of people coming to look and check things out. The paper noted that a Dutch agency studying remigration predicted that at best only about 6 percent of the estimated 150,000 Surinamers abroad might return. That would amount to fewer than 10,000. But could jobs be created for even that many? Lachmon began to back off regarding early elections, recognizing that more vital things had to be done—in particular in the field of job creation.

Here, too, he came into confrontation with Arron. The latter was committed in his long-range development planning to a vast bauxite development scheme in the western part of the country. Infrastructural investments, including a road, railroad, dam, and harbor, were slated to consume the major part of Dutch development monies. Such work might engage the services of a considerable work force (many expected to come from Guyana), but its ultimate product—new bauxite mines, power generation, and refining and smelting operations—would all be capital intensive, with only the downstream usages of power and water helping economic growth in the settled areas of the country.

Arron's commitment to the "West Suriname Project" probably stemmed from several sources: (1) the success Suriname had enjoyed on the eve of independence by joining the International Bauxite Producers Association, which permitted it to hike the taxes paid by multinational corporations fourfold, in tandem with other members; (2) continuing good prices for bauxite and its refined products on the world market; and (3) the desire to create another "growth pole" in the country to rein in the rampant urbanization focused on Paramaribo.<sup>2</sup>

Lachmon had different priorities, condemning the "capital-intensive show projects" in western Suriname and urging more small-scale, labor-intensive investments. Hidden agendas, of course, were involved. From the perspective of ethnicity, large projects in mining and industry were expected to benefit Creoles, while small-scale projects were identified with Hindustanis; Creoles were looking more for employment and Hindustanis more for chances at enterprise.

If the Dutch could have exercised some restraint on the ruling Creole government, they chose not to. Anna Maria Janssen points out that "the Dutch government wanted above all to avoid being seen as 'neocolonial.'" Thus, as Dutch representatives met to plan their development aid program in 1974 and 1975, Arron's people bullied the total figure from 800 million Dutch guilders to an incredible 3.2 billion. As Janssen puts it, they met little resistance because of the Den Uyl government's "Calvinistic guilt feelings."<sup>3</sup>

Once the monies began to flow, a Commission on Development Cooperation Netherlands-Suriname (CONS) was set up, with three officials of each country

charged with reviewing the long-term and annual budgets. Here, too, the Dutch might have exercised some restraint on the West Suriname Project. While they did complain that 65 percent of CONS funds going for infrastructure constituted a substantial deviation from the proportions agreed upon in 1975 (25 percent for infrastructure, 25 percent for socioeducational projects, and 50 percent for more immediately productive activities), they were apparently too paralyzed ideologically to do anything about it. Thus, while the NPS just barely had the votes to push their long-term development program through Parliament, the Dutch, holding a veto, chose to display only verbal resistance.<sup>4</sup>

In anticipation of elections coming sooner or later, party activity picked up by mid-1976. The VHP's somewhat more progressive but small rival, the *Hindoestaanse Progressieve Partij* (Hindustani Progressive Party, HPP) changed its name to *Hernieuwde Progressieve Partij* (Renewed Progressive Party), deethnicizing itself after the model of the VHP (whose own "H" had gone from *Hindostaans* to *Hervormings* (Reform)). A minirevolt within the VHP also occurred. The *ruziemaker* was Evert Azimullah, a young political scientist who tried to encourage a "new style" of politics that would heal the breaches with the HPP, and the ostracized former VHP member George Hindorie. (Hindorie had been the heir apparent in the VHP when, in the midst of the independence struggle, he "crossed the aisle" to support independence and seek reconciliation between the VHP and NPS. His action was repudiated by Lachmon, and he was purged from the VHP. He sat now as a one-man faction in the *Parlement*.) As much as he might have preferred it, Azimullah felt there was no chance of restoring the alliance with the NPS. Thus, why not get the Hindustani house back in order and as strong as possible, to force the Creoles to choose between consociationalism and defeat?

One likely Creole partner for the VHP (as *unlikely* as it seemed) was the small nationalist party that had been the driving force for independence, the *Partij van de Nationalistische Republiek* (Nationalistic Republic Party, PNR), led by Eddy Bruma. The PNR had been part of the *Nationale Partij Kombinatie* (NPK), the NPS team that won a narrow majority in the 1972 elections. But strains between the PNR and the NPS were growing, particularly in the conduct of PNR labor leader Fred Derby, who, despite being a member of the NPK parliamentary delegation, continually spoke out against the Arron government. (At one point, Derby declared that he would "unmask the enemies of the workers in NPS circles." Somehow he was restrained from such an interesting revelation by his colleagues in the PNR.) Because of Derby's unruly behavior, and the energetic performance by other PNR leaders, some NPS members began to contemplate maneuvering the PNR out of the NPK alliance before they were themselves outmaneuvered. If the VHP leaders could swallow their bitterness over the independence affair, and the PNR could forgive them for their anti-independence behavior, Surinamese politics might

turn these strangers into bedfellows.

Early in July, Arron declared that there would be no elections until the end of 1977. Regarding his November 19 promise, on the eve of independence, he insisted that he had qualified it (in the privacy of the Governor's chambers where it was made) to be contingent upon approval in the NPK's party councils. That, he implied, had not been forthcoming. In any event, there was no good reason for early elections, he insisted, and a great deal of work remained to be done to update the voters lists. Would the Dutch cut off aid because of this delay? Confidently, and mistakenly, he declared on July 26, 1976: "The Netherlands will never proceed to cut off its development aid to Suriname." Lachmon called for an interpellation vote over the elections. Predictably, it went down to a narrow defeat. (To demonstrate that this was a matter of *party* and not *ethnic* politics, the Creole-Indonesian parliamentary majority "generously" tossed its predominantly Hindu opposition a minor sop, one that had long been demanded. They passed a bill forbidding the slaughter of cows.

## THE 1977 ELECTIONS

President Johan Ferrier opened the first full session of Suriname's new *Parlement* in September 1976, as he had those of the *Staten* during his many years as Governor. He spoke of foreign affairs: Suriname's admission to the United Nations, entry into the Lomé and other international accords, and the still outstanding border issues with French Guiana and Guyana; praised the military (defending the borders, stopping smuggling, and deepening knowledge of the country's interior); and expressed the government's high expectations regarding its development cooperation with The Netherlands in western Suriname. Economically, the country was in excellent shape. He acknowledged a budget deficit of some Sf 40 million, but pledged the government's efforts to keep it limited. Foreign reserves, fortunately, had risen steadily in the last few years, from Sf 131 million in 1973 to 205 million in 1975. In addition, foreign development aid should see the country through to a steadily rising economic development.<sup>5</sup>

Without a date for the elections, issues and alignments were subject to tentative exploration. Lachmon made a fresh stab at the restoration of consociationalism among the VHP, NPS, and KTPI. Younger members of the VHP, he said, were pushing for an alliance with the PNR. But a long-term, not a short-term, alliance was what the VHP needed. Lachmon would prefer that to be with the NPS. Within the NPS there had been a long-running debate between party leader Henck Arron and his deputy, Olton van Genderen, on the wisdom of resuming the *verbroedering*<sup>6</sup> (brotherhood) alliance with the VHP. Their split passed through the membership of the NPS like a fault line,

producing periodic rumors and appeals from the rank and file. Rufus Nooitmeer, third man in the party, and also a *verbroedering* advocate, publicly reminded Arron of his promise to hold internal elections in the NPS. "I'm not anti-Arron," he said, "but I'd run for the party leadership if such an election were held."

Surinamers have often been criticized for their *winti wai...* philosophy. This irresponsible attitude finds its greatest expression in the burgeoning civil service, which, thanks to patronage under the *verbroedering* governments (1958-67), created countless jobs for both NPS and VHP activists. After the NPS-VHP falling out, civil service sabotage and nonperformance became a problem. Top civil servants appointed from a rival party were placed on permanent leave rather than be entrusted with the policies of their political enemies. But even getting subordinates from your *own* party to perform their jobs wasn't easy. *De Vrije Stem* (a Paramaribo daily paper) wrote that most government employees did nothing.

[T]heir boss has little control over them since they were placed [*geregeld*] politically. Of course, the boss has to try to give them work. But they will make it clear to him that they don't answer to him but to the [more highly placed] minister. They're nothing but profiteers, yes even parasites. They squeeze the society dry without showing the least readiness to give something back for the money they receive each month.<sup>7</sup>

The Dutch development aid received after independence permitted the cost of bureaucracy to remain unnaturally large (it had reached 57.5 percent of the total government budget in 1978 and was to reach 63.4 percent in 1979<sup>8</sup>). Arron's logic for this expansion, according to Rudie Kagie, was "to fight poverty" and "to prevent Suriname from being emptied out" by emigration.<sup>9</sup>

Waste and corruption, in the public mind, grew the higher up the ladder you went. But scandal depended on whether the culprits were "yours" or "theirs." In December 1976, Agricultural Minister Willy Soemita, leader of the KTPI, had been charged with accepting bribes in the distribution of land. His party's rank and file immediately threatened to leave the NPK if he were prosecuted. Graft and corruption were clearly seen as accepted practices at which Creoles and Hindustanis were simply more skilled than Indonesians. All through the 1977 campaign, KTPI members kept pressure on Arron to seek Soemita's release. Meanwhile, a new Indonesian political party, the *Pendawalima* (PL), was set up by former NPS member Salim Somohardjo. If the KTPI were to crumble, *Pendawalima* hoped to pick up the pieces.

Another party came into existence at this time. The *Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie* (Union of Progressive Workers and Farmers, PALU) had been active in The Netherlands for several years. With many of its youthful members returned from Dutch schooling, it registered as a Surinamese party in preparation for the coming elections. In so doing, it joined a battery

of other small radical parties: the *Volkspartij* (People's Party, VP) of Ruben Lie Pauw Sam, the *Demokratische Volksfront* (Democratic People's Front, DVF) of Humphrey Keerveld, the *Progressieve Socialistiese Partij* (Progressive Socialist Party, PSP) of Andre Kamperveen, the *Surinaamse Socialistische Unie* (Surinamese Socialist Union, SSU) of Henk Herrenberg, and the *Kommunistiese Partij Suriname* (Communist Party, KPS) of Bram Behr. Each attracted a small, vociferous following. But how could any of them expect to make a good showing against the established monoliths? Or did they think that the monoliths were crumbling?

The better part of 1977 was spent in a swirl of wheeling and dealing, as the small parties experimented with a Third Front against the two powerhouses, and the latter toyed with each of them in turn. First among the Third Front alliances was one between the SSU and PSP. Kamperveen, a national soccer hero, faced the same difficulty that Fred Derby did as a labor leader—translating support in one area into votes in the other. Herrenberg was an even more questionable vote getter, having spent most of the 1960s in Algeria. Together, however, Kamperveen and Herrenberg might be able to generate energy, ideas, and excitement. Evert Azimullah sought to organize a similar Third Front around a group he called VHP-New Style. Meanwhile, charges flew back and forth between the VP and the DVF regarding responsibility for a group of troublemakers who had broken up a DVF meeting. The DVF blamed the VP. Lie Pauw Sam put the blame on the KPS's Bram Behr, acting as an *agent provocateur*. It was not a very auspicious start for the extreme Left!

But the NPS-bloc was not doing well, either. In early March, Arron publicly advised Soemita to resign because of the bribery question and "the incriminating evidence that was piling up against him." Public sentiment might have matched that of the cynical cartoonist in *De Ware Tijd* who depicted Soemita as a tenpin standing in front of a set of other government "tenpins" who included Bruma and Arron. Two weeks later, the KTPI formally broke its ties to the NPK and joined the opposition—all, that is, except its members in Parliament, who gave continued support to Arron.

In contrast to the NPS bloc, the VHP enjoyed some luck in raiding the HPP—drawing the brilliant science professor Baal Oemrawsing into the fold, along with Azimullah, frustrated at the response to his "Third Front" efforts. Talks were held with Somohardjo's *PL* and the Kamperveen-Herrenberg *Socialistiese Partij Suriname* (Suriname Socialist Party, SPS). Ultimately, both groups were brought into the VHP bloc (called the *Verenigde Democratische Partijen*, United Democratic Parties, VDP) and given electable seats (four for the PL, one for the SPS). Many felt that the VDP was taking a rather big gamble in giving Henk Herrenberg an electable position on its ticket. Herrenberg, despite inflammatory writings in The Netherlands, was an energetic campaigner and, perhaps, after his lengthy romance with Algeria,

older and wiser. Lachmon, it seemed, was looking for any able-bodied Creole to complete the integration of the VDP ticket.

In this sense, the VDP and the NPK both were moving from postelectoral to preelectoral consociationalism. In the 1970s and 1980s, East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago experimented with this as a way of toppling the Creole-dominated People's National Movement. But a consociational electoral lineup was looked upon with distrust by Creoles there. In Guyana, internal consociationalism in the People's Progressive Party led to a landslide victory in 1953, but divide-and-conquer tactics by the British and Americans split the party into Creole and East Indian segments. Still, ethnic power-sharing remains the dream of most Caribbean political rhetoric. In Suriname, it may have been a little one-sided, as in the VDP camp, but it was an important accomplishment.

Preelectoral consociationalism came about in the NPK camp as well. Most of the NPK partners were eager to make a deal with the HPP, on condition that it would make room for the VHP defector George Hindorie. Only the PNR was opposed to broadening the alliance, suspecting that the seats awarded to the HPP might come at the PNR's expense. Arron denied this repeatedly, but with little time left before the registration of parties for the October 31 elections, the NPS and PNR fought over the seats the latter should get (the former offering three, as in 1973; the latter demanding five). The NPS party council unanimously rejected the PNR's demands and, despite some hastily made PNR compromises, the alliance was formally sundered on August 18.

The PNR now found itself in the crowded field of smaller radical parties, none of which could bring themselves to make a last-minute alliance with this more prestigious exile. The DVF had formed a *Derde Bloc* (Third Bloc) with a number of minuscule ethnic and regional groups. The VP's talks with the DVF and PALU had come to nothing. Thus, all three ended up with separate lists, to be joined by yet another radical group, the *Nieuwe Democratische Partij* (New Democratic Party, NDP), set up by Denise de Hart, a progressive businesswoman.

Could Suriname once again become a multiparty system involving more than the two big party blocs? If so, who might emerge to hold the balance of power between the VDP and NPK? The VP, PNR, and PALU were all expected to pick up at least one seat and perhaps as many as three. Such calculations, however, may have triggered a "third party" fear among those still drawn to ethnic communitarianism. "Don't waste your vote," the bloc leaders warned, "stay with us, despite your reservations!" The VP's Lie Pauw Sam countered such appeals with his own critique: Arron, he said, "is slow and unimaginative;...and Lachmon, while more of a leader, is reactionary and egoistic. Do you really want either of them in charge of Suriname's development?"

The smaller parties were especially sharp in their criticism of the NPK's and

VDP's positions on eradicating poverty and asserting control over the country's natural resources. Of course, they said, the NPK was eager to tap some of this wealth in western Suriname. But for whom? For the foreign aluminum companies, construction companies, consulting firms, and the like, together with the local politicians who scored generous rakeoffs for their cooperation. University of Amsterdam sociology professor G. J. Kruijer had just published *Suriname: De problemen en hun oplossingen* (The Problems and Their Solutions),<sup>10</sup> a sequel to his *Suriname, neokolonie in Rijksverband* (Neocolony Within the Kingdom),<sup>11</sup> both well-written, radical attacks on the politico-economic exploitation of Suriname by Dutch, American, and local elites. Kruijer's model of a *welvaart-naast-armoede-systeem* (prosperity-alongside-poverty-system) was an application of the dependency school of analysis to the Surinamese case. His books enjoyed a wide readership, particularly among Surinamese students in The Netherlands and former students politically radicalized in the heady atmosphere of Dutch student life in the 1960s and early 1970s. Student groups in The Netherlands, like the PALU, had also contributed to the stream of radical literature and mobilizing activities that were ultimately brought to play in the 1977 electoral campaign.

As if this body of thought and energy were not enough to feed a dynamic political campaign, yet another *Rekenkamer* report had come out, finding millions of guilders spent irresponsibly amid recordkeeping and reporting conditions of "unbelievable sloppiness" (*onvoorstelbare slordigheid*). The opposition parties surely had all the ammunition they needed to go NPK-hunting. It seemed unbelievable that the NPK could win. But it did.

Amid the nearly universal predictions of a VDP victory, one thing was forgotten: between 11,500 and 12,000 Hindustanis had emigrated to The Netherlands since 1973. Moreover, the seemingly shabby manner in which the VHP had treated George Hindorie, the "defector" who saved the day for Arron in 1975, and Hindustani hopes for the HPP restoring a consociational veneer to Suriname's government may have combined to produce crossover voting for the NPK. Finally, a widespread expectation of a VDP win and/or a third party ally for the VDP may have had differential effects on voter turnout among Hindustani and Creole voters—the former staying at home, the latter rallying to the NPK (as *De Ware Tijd* put it, out of anxiety).

Just as important were two other events: the collapse of the solid Indonesian bloc, which had helped give the NPK its victory in 1973, and a last-minute scandal that threatened both the NPK and the VDP. Willy Soemita's arrest and trial, running concurrently with the election campaign, were a political embarrassment for the NPK. His sentencing on September 2 to a year in prison was preceded by speculation that the NPK would bend the rules (and lean on the courts) so as to keep the KTPI in the alliance. From prison, Soemita urged his party to join the VDP alliance. But could they coexist with the PL there? Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea,

the KTPI had no earnest suitors other than the NPK, despite its leader having been imprisoned by his own government. "It's curious," Eddy Bruma observed, "how they [the NPS] fell on their knees to the KTPI but couldn't even talk to us." Bruma's observation was somewhat exaggerated, for repeated demonstrations by KTPI crowds outside the Prime Minister's office failed to gain amnesty for their leader.

The issue that may have topped all others in affecting last-minute swing votes was the appearance of a doctored bank statement showing Arron in possession of a \$2.3 million bank account in Miami. Surfacing only three days before the election, there was hardly any time to confirm its validity. Yet anyone with a knowledge of Dutch and American math transcription could see the forgery: commas were used in place of periods, and vice versa (e.g., \$2.300.000,00). The press quickly put the blame on Eddy Bruma. He later explained, "I was in charge of foreign currency [in the NPK government], and this was handed to me. I took it to [fellow PNR leaders] Eddy Hoost and Fred Derby, and they said to take it to [President] Ferrier for advice. To our surprise, he took it directly to the press." Who had given the document to Bruma? Andre Kamperveen, leader of the SPS, a VDP alliance partner. But Kamperveen pleaded innocence, saying that he received the bank statement from Erwin Sanders, a Miami engineer who was suing the Arron government for withdrawing a contract to build a bridge over the Suriname River. While some nagging issues remained, the affair was swiftly investigated by the press and probably had a major boomerang effect, winning sympathy votes for Arron and the NPK.

In the elections, the PNR was left without a seat, the VDP collected seventeen—the same number as in 1973—and the NPK took all the rest. As the NPK claimed its narrow victory (see Table 2.1), the PL and the VDP cried "foul." In the predominantly Indonesian district of Commewijne, where the NPK's margin of victory was pencil thin, numerous irregularities were alleged by the VDP's poll watchers. Commewijne's District Commissioner, Kadi Kartokromo, claimed the complaints were invalid and refused a recount. The VDP was furious and continued to assert that the NPK claimed victory by fraudulent means. These accusations were never satisfactorily proved or refuted, and thus remained politically available for both the VDP *and*, at a later time, the military and its radical supporters.

A quick glance at the table will show the sharp discrepancy in voter:seat ratios between districts I (downtown Paramaribo) and II (the semiurban and suburban ring around it). Both districts allotted their seats by proportional representation. But with only six seats for its 54,000-plus votes cast, District II had a *kiesdeler* (votes:seat ratio) of 9,158. In District I, by contrast, a candidate could get elected with as few as 2,997 votes. Major adjustments in the apportionment of seats were called for. But with the NPK in power (and profiting from the arrangement), it was not likely to happen soon. Looking at

**TABLE 2.1**  
**VOTES CAST IN THE 1977 ELECTIONS**  
 Votes by Party; Seats Won in Parentheses

Election District	NPK	VDP	PNRa	VP	PALU	DBK	PNPb	VMPc
I. Paramaribo (10 seats, PRd)	17,039 (7)	8,087 (3)	1,966	1,680	271	576	248	103
II. Suriname (6 seats, PR)	19,278 (2)	30,305 (4)	2,652	1,848	303	433	49	81
III. Para (1 seat, SMDe)	2,792 (1)	1,422	f					
IV. Commewijne (2 seats, TMDg)	2,880 (2)	2,691 2,696	h					
V. Saramacca (2 seats, TMD)	1,534 1,509	2,376 2,377 (2)	i					
VI. Nickerie (2 seats, TMD)	4,032 4,014	6,132 6,127 (2)	j					
VII. Coronie (1 seat, SMD)	774 (1)	430	k					
VIII. Beneden Marowijne (1 seat, SMD)	2,895 (1)	1,604	l					
IX. Boven Marowijne (1 seat, SMD)	773 (1)	556	m					
X. Brokopondo (1 seat, SMD)	3,532 (1)	1,383	n					
National List (12 seats, PR)	56,176 (6)	54,583 (6)	5,871	4,534	1,006	964	225	361

## NOTES:

- a. Full name: PNR-*Arbeidersfront* (Workers front).
  - b. *Progressieve Nationale Partij* (Progressive National Party), Creole alliance partner of the VHP in 1969-73.
  - c. *Vooruitstrevende Moslims Partij* (Progressive Muslim Party).
  - d. Proportional representation, i.e., seats allotted according to proportion of votes won.
  - e. Single-member district, also known as "winner-take-all" or "first-past-the-post."
  - f. Three other candidates, together, polled 739 votes.
  - g. Two-member district, somewhat unique to Suriname—where voters could cast two ballots for two candidates, mixing or matching parties, with the first two past the post taking all.
  - h. Two other slates polled 390 votes.
  - i. Two other slates polled 258.
  - j. Two other slates polled 742.
  - k. Two other candidates polled 3 votes between them.
  - l. Three other candidates drew 443 votes.
  - m. One other candidate polled 158 votes.
  - n. Three other candidates picked up 451 votes.
- 

the results in the *landelijke lijst* (national list) polling votes nationwide for a 12-seat distribution, *De Ware Tijd* observed that had the country had "more PR" (a single multimember district, as in Israel or The Netherlands), smaller parties would have picked up three or four seats. With twenty seats needed to govern, and the NPK probably taking eighteen to the VDP's seventeen in such an arrangement, the PNR and VP, each with two seats, could have exercised an influence far out of proportion to their positions. "Thank heavens we don't have more PR," the paper commented.

## A FRESH START TOWARD PARALYSIS

Arron put together his cabinet from the NPS (with fifteen seats and seven ministries), PSV (three seats and two ministries), KTPI (three seats and two ministries), and HPP (one seat—Hindorie's—and two ministries). But things began to fall apart even as he did so. Strains in the KTPI between jailed party leader Soemita and the elected members of Parliament emerged over candidates for the KTPI's assigned ministries, and the PSV did an about-face on its own nominee for Economic Affairs, making Parliament Chairman Wijntuin look clumsy and ungracious. As if to confirm that opinion, his handling of the sessions to swear in new members and prepare the legislative agenda was marked by bitter exchanges and an opposition walkout.

Fresh Dutch demands in the CONS meetings for small-scale projects in

agriculture and manufacturing, together with a state visit in February 1978 by Queen Juliana (who would yield her throne to daughter Beatrix in 1980), put the spotlight on Dutch-Surinamese cooperation, especially as it related to western Suriname. The new Minister of Development Cooperation, Jan de Koning, criticized the operation of CONS—its failure to follow through on agreements, lack of supervision, absence of consistency. There was no criticism of the West Suriname Project *per se*, only of the way things had gone under his predecessor, Jan Pronk. (The Socialist Den Uyl government had been replaced in The Hague by a center-right coalition, led by the Christian Democrats.)

Frank Essed, head of the Surinamese section of CONS, was quick to respond. "Our goal," he said, "has never changed. It is to make ourselves economically self-sufficient within ten years [when the aid would run out]." The Dutch were wrong to emphasize small "social projects" that would only increase Suriname's dependency. "Yes, a great deal of the Dutch aid has gone to west Suriname. But it has been to guarantee the development of the 'whole land,' not just the capital area." In this way, he concluded, many more production opportunities might be opened.

Still, serious problems loomed. Guyana was reluctant to agree to a compact on Corantijn River usage necessary for the hydroelectric project; and, in response to the 1974 International Bauxite Producers Association accord, aluminum companies began to develop their fallback resources (in Brazil, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and especially Australia), driving market prices down to a point where investors lost interest in the West Suriname Project. Lachmon warned of the cost and uncertainty of the West Suriname "gamble" and urged deferring it for the time being.

The *Comite Christelijke Kerken* (Committee of Christian Churches, CCK) warned the government not to forget the little man. Well-being, not prosperity (*welzijn niet welvaart*), should be the goal.

In general one must admit with disappointment that the development cooperation [CONS] is not reaching the poorest and neediest elements of our society, and that these are not participating in the changes in our country...

At the same time, it is precisely some of these people [Amerindian natives] who, living in western Suriname..., are seeing their living conditions and rights violated by projects that pay the least account to their presence in the area.<sup>12</sup>

As if to underline the latter point, mysterious fires had destroyed several lumber mills along the rail line from the Bakhuis Mountains to Apura, disrupting the supply of ties for the railroad and threatening the project's completion.<sup>13</sup>

The CCK also had some sharp words for the operations of *Parlement*:

The Parliament should above all be a reflection of the will of the people and of their

voice at the polls. Therefore it is strange that preference is given to divisiveness and conflict in the Parliament's work rather than collective acceptance of their responsibilities.... As far as we can see, the people are more united than Parliament would have us believe.<sup>14</sup>

Time and again, Parliament was disrupted by insults exchanged between government and opposition benches, usually resulting in the Speaker throwing members of the opposition out. On one occasion, Lachmon was ordered from the hall, and on another, Herrenberg was ordered ousted by the police, "with force if necessary." He was removed chair and all. *De Ware Tijd* condemned the intolerant behavior of Speaker Wijntuin. "He sets a terrible example for the public," it declared, and "threatens to start us down a road that must put an end to democracy."

Perhaps one reads more into a quote like this than is warranted. But the eighteen months separating it from the military coup were filled with additional signs of breakdown within the newly elected NPK government. As Willy Soemita prepared to leave prison after his one-year sentence expired, a fight broke out between him and one of the KTPI legislators, R. Amat. The latter was finally purged from the party, and, since Arron had sided with Amat, the KTPI announced its departure from the NPK. The tally was now twenty seats for the NPK and nineteen for the combined opposition. *De Ware Tijd* wondered "What if someone falls ill?" And when NPK MP Sonny Kartopawiro claimed that the VHP had offered him Sf 90,000 to leave the government benches, the paper asked what the NPK may have given him to stay. Every one of the NPK's twenty MPs was in a position to bribe the coalition's leadership, the paper concluded.

Speculation resumed about formation of a broad-based (NPS-VHP) government as a way to cope with the country's political polarization. As the KTPI tore itself apart, Rufus Nooitmeer judged the VHP to be a better potential ally, and Wijntuin, despite his harsh treatment of the opposition, said he, too, favored an NPS-VHP tie, feeling that there were too many weak parties in the system to provide government responsibility. Their arguments had no effect on Arron.

Arron's capacity to hold fast to a previously determined course of action would both serve and hurt him. Besides sticking to his decision to postpone the promised elections after independence and standing fast against resumption of the VHP alliance, he ill-advisedly chose to stand his ground against the noncommissioned officers in Suriname's armed forces in a separate dispute. While this was ultimately to topple his government, the issue was one that came along slowly and may have seemed quite manageable. This will be discussed in greater detail below, but it is worth noting that Arron at least talked with the Union of Noncommissioned Officers (*Bond van Militair Kader, BOMIKA*) about their grievances in November 1978, and secured the release

of the union's secretary from military confinement two months later.

Meanwhile, following the example of the KTPI, the PNR launched a fratricidal leadership struggle to replace Eddy Bruma, who resigned in November 1978. The contest was joined by Robin Ravales, a popular poet better known by his pen name Dobru, and Harold Rusland, a lawyer and labor leader like Bruma. But while Dobru was favored by Bruma and the party's rank and file, Rusland had support from more radical members of the top leadership, like labor leader Fred Derby, former Minister of Justice Eddy Hoost, and former Minister of Labor Frits Frijmersum. The contest, after several rounds, was formally won by Dobru, but at the cost of party unity. Had the military not intervened in 1980, the PNR would have fielded two slates of candidates in the elections that year.

### THE KOORNDIJK AFFAIR

On May 3, 1979, Walter Zalmijn died after a lengthy illness. He was the NPS representative from the Upper Marowijne district in eastern Suriname, home of the Aukaner (Djuka) and Paramakaner peoples, as well as several smaller Bush Negro and Amerindian groups. Following the electoral guidelines set up in the 1960s to avoid the inconvenience of byelections, Zalmijn had two *plaatsvervangers* (replacements) who had been elected with him in 1977. Max Koorndijk was the next in line for the seat. But the 1960 guidelines included a procedural rule regarding the swearing in of elected officials (and their replacements). It required a full quorum of the Parliament. And here was where the fear raised in *De Ware Tijd* at the time of the KTPI walkout became a reality. The VDP announced that it would not provide such a quorum unless the government agreed to schedule new elections.

The NPK haughtily dismissed the idea. Parliament Speaker Wijntuin claimed that there would be no difficulty in admitting Koorndijk as a matter of "household business." The VDP quickly protested to President Ferrier, but the latter said he lacked the power to rule on such a case. The swearing-in ceremony was accompanied by crowds jeering at the VDP members entering (and then walking out of) the Parliament, and Lachmon spoke bitterly of the constitution being violated by "power-drunken" politicians.

At subsequent meetings, the VDP displayed disruptive behavior, refusing to vote on anything, yelling epithets during the reading of "new business," accusing the government of "fascism" and "dictatorship," and tearing up the Rules of Procedure and throwing them around the hall as confetti. *De Ware Tijd* commented that Suriname had probably reached a new low in parliamentary rowdiness, but recalled some rather wretched examples from virtually every government that could match the present case. Moreover, it suggested that this sort of behavior was mostly put on for effect: "A member

such as Alwin Mungra is play-acting when he misbehaves himself, for it is just a little game to him. Wienka [i.e., Wijntuin] knows how to do it, too, as does Djende [Hindorie]. But their colleague Baal Oemrawsingh really winds himself up; with him, it's bloody serious. This is dangerous and can cause real problems."<sup>15</sup>

President Ferrier was repeatedly called upon to take action, and refused. Only days before Zalmijn's death, the President had expressed his desire to retire from office. Chagrin was mingled with concern in the days to come as Surinamers debated how to replace him, and with whom. But with Zalmijn's death, Ferrier evidently postponed his decision for a while. There seemed little he could do, according to his reading of the constitution. One lawyer's group agreed with the VDP's charge that Koorndijk's admission was unconstitutional, suggesting that Ferrier refuse to sign any bills passed by the illegitimate NPK "majority." This must have been a galling suggestion to Arron, for the most important piece of legislation he had pending was a treaty with France over the boundary with French Guiana. Although Lachmon had once made an issue of the boundary and was now about to see the question resolved in Suriname's favor, he could not be lured back to *Parlement*. Nor could Wijntuin lure the old warhorse to a parliamentary celebration of Lachmon's thirtieth anniversary as a legislator.

The impasse was finally broken at the end of August 1979, as doubt began to grow about the opening ceremonies of Parliament, scheduled for September 1. It appeared possible that President Ferrier would exercise one of his few formal powers and refuse to read the (NPK-written) presidential address. BOMIKA then let it be known that it would have nothing to do with the suppression of public demonstrations related to the event, citing the Nuremberg principle of refusal to obey unjust military (or civilian) commands.

With all this hanging over his head, Arron finally gave in and agreed to hold new elections within six months, provided the VDP would cooperate in swearing in the long-suffering Koorndijk. That event took place on August 31, permitting Ferrier to give his speech the following day and get *Parlement* working again.

## COMMENTARY

Even apart from the VDP's long list of grievances and this last-minute show of muscle by the military, Suriname's first four years of independence did not exhibit much about which one could be very confident. Popular support for the government remained tentative and overwhelmingly ethnic in its foundations. The euphoria of independence, if it can even remotely be called that, was short-lived. Nationalism, as its residue, was shared by very few and never adequately translated into energy or sacrifice in the public or private

sphere. Opportunities didn't come knocking, and efforts to create them were more likely to undermine the social fabric through mammoth projects that benefited the few, on the one hand, or through more widespread petty corruption and *onderonsjes* (deals among friends), on the other. Rudie Kagie observes that even the *Vereniging van Surinaamse Bedrijfsleven* (Society of Surinamese Trade and Industry) had warned by August 1979 of "a feeling of uneasiness regarding the tempo in which the country's socioeconomic development is being carried forward."<sup>16</sup>

When it came to the political process, the public found little from which to take inspiration. Government and opposition, even if "play-acting," provided a model of critical thinking that was seldom constructive. *Ad hominem* attacks could at times be savage, and the Speaker's role as moderator was almost always one-sided, censoring or expelling opposition members from the hall but seldom those on the government's benches. Drawn-out stalemates such as those over the Koorndijk affair and the 1977 elections closed the Parliament down for months at a time. Janssen notes that it acquired the popular nickname "*circus stupido*."<sup>17</sup> Little wonder, then, that many Surinamers came to believe that some other form of government might be desirable.

How was it that a formal democracy could betray its trust? Much attention has been focused on the problems of multiethnic politics. But there are other explanations, too. The organizations that compete in democratic elections are often not very democratic. This was pointed out long ago by the European social thinkers Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca, and Vilfredo Pareto.<sup>18</sup> Political elites in both governing and opposition groups may be wellentrenched and beyond challenge from the rank and file. The circulation of elites, according to Pareto, can be extremely limited. Michels cataloged many of the means of elite entrenchment in his classic study, *Political Parties*.

In the 1970s, many throughout the Caribbean began to feel similar doubts about their received institutions. After a decade or more spent watching the collapse of democratic constitutions throughout Africa and Asia while priding themselves on their own political maturity, Caribbean states experienced a wave of black power and other revolutionary disturbances that set politically interested groups everywhere thinking about better ways to govern themselves. Reflecting upon the overthrow of the Eric Gairy regime in Grenada in 1979, an editor of *Caribbean and West Indies Chronicle* wrote:

The trouble is that received democratic traditions, in the Caribbean and far beyond, are under very serious pressure. Parliament, conceived as a means of putting a degree of legitimate power in the hands of the governed, has long been losing that power to the Executive. Tight party discipline means that a Member of Parliament represents his party in his constituency, rather than his constituents in Parliament.

The Caribbean has learned how easily men of ability are excluded from the governing process by the multiparty system in small societies short of skills. It has seen how easily the electoral process can be interfered with, how easily independent

newspapers or unions can be undermined, Parliaments manipulated, dissent ignored.

It has seen how easily patronage can ensure that votes are cast for almost any reason except sober political choice. It has seen how easily "democracy" becomes a code word for taking sides in a real or imagined Cold War, rather than for the fierce defence of a people's right to take their own decisions....

The steady erosion of democracy has been an almost universal feature of recent western history. That is no argument for rejecting traditional structures. But neither is it an argument for retaining familiar forms at all costs, regardless of the political realities underneath.<sup>19</sup>

Some, if not all, of these concerns were shared by observers of Suriname's political process, including many members of the dominant political parties themselves. But as the last paragraph indicates, change for its own sake came with no guarantees. The "circulation of elites" might be burst open with armored cars, but would that improve the performance of rulers and satisfaction of society?

## NOTES

1. *De Ware Tijd*, Jan. 6, 1976. Literally, "the wind blows, the government pays out." This fatalistic and socially irresponsible thought is the public service's version of Benjamin Franklin's verity about "death and taxes." Neither helps establish a positive image of government, were one warranted.

2. See Anna Maria Janssen, *Suriname: Ontwikkelingsland in het Caraïbisch gebied* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1986), 132-33. This "growth-pole" (*groeipool*) idea was shared by several prominent development planners in Suriname, among them Frank Essed and Derrek Ferrier. With over 75 percent of the country's population gravitating to the greater Paramaribo area, Suriname faced the typical problem of hydrocephalic development plaguing Mexico, Peru, and many other Third World countries. Ferrier's proposal for a new *groeipool* was on the Coppename River in Saramacca, halfway between Paramaribo and the Apoera-Kabalebo area where the West Suriname Project was focused. Essed's insistence on Apoera was, according to Ferrier, intended to stimulate the ultimate unification of the three Guianas, since Apoera was located on the Corantijn River, the border between Suriname and Guyana, roughly the demographic and geographic center of the three countries put together. Interview, Aug. 11, 1990.

3. Janssen, 132. She reports that Development Cooperation Minister Jan Pronk was also committed to the principles developed by Third World nations at the United Nations and embodied in the New International Economic Order (95). Elma Verhey and Gerard van Westerloo give a colorful example of this bargaining strategy: "At the end of the discussions, Pronk felt that the amount had grown so large...that there ought to be some provision guaranteeing Dutch businesses preference [in contract-bidding] if they were reasonably competitive. Suriname's Vice Premier Olton van Genderen exploded, lifted his finger and roared that 'Jantje Pronk was at it again, trying to suck

Suriname dry.' Pronk was furious. Both men went aside, settled their dispute and came back to the bargaining table with their report: the provision [benefiting the Dutch] would be added. 'Of course,' Van Genderen added, 'we will have to talk some more about the size of the total package.' The dispute cost The Netherlands another Nf 500 million (app. \$200 million)." Elma Verhey and Gerard Van Westerloo, *Het legergroene Suriname* (Amsterdam: Weekbladders, 1983), 41.

4. Professor Van Dam, a Dutch adviser to CONS, displayed this double-minded quality, calling for new policies in Suriname regarding prices, imports, land use, credit, water allocation, trade, and storage. He didn't like the West Suriname Project very much, arguing that "The Dutch see the future of Suriname in the production of wood, wood products, food, and food processing" (*De Ware Tijd*, Sept. 29, 1976). Pronk predicted an increase in unemployment, even as the West Suriname Project was carried out, arguing that 65 percent of the Dutch aid going to infrastructure was too high (*ibid.*, Oct. 21, 1976). In January 1978, the Dutch suspended the CONS talks in protest, but elections produced a new Dutch government that proceeded to accept the continued Surinamese excesses (Janssen, 97). One can only speculate at this reversal of Gramscian ideological hegemony (the "dependent" country intimidating the motherland). The best explanation offered by Suriname's neo-Marxists is the considerable financial benefit that accrued to those consultants and engineering firms that were involved in the West Suriname contracts. See, for example, Sandew Hira, *De staatsgreep in Suriname: Achtergronden en vooruitzichten* (Amsterdam: Internationale Socialistiese Publikaties, 1980), 9-13; and Janssen, 133-35.

5. The event had an element of mockery to it, as VHP members, chafing at Parliament Speaker Emile Wijntuin's call for a more formal dress code, showed up in all sorts of formal attire, including turbans, berets, and Nehru jackets. *De Ware Tijd*, Sept. 3, 1976.

6. This was the term used by the previous NPS leader, Johan Adolf Pengel, and Jaggernath Lachmon to describe their political alliance in the 1950s and early 1960s.

7. Quoted in Rudie Kagie, *Een gewezen wingewest: Suriname voor en na de staatsgreep* (Houten: Het Wereldvenster, 1980), 167-68.

8. The two figures are from *De Ware Tijd*, Sept. 2, 1978, and Kagie, 169.

9. Kagie, 169.

10. Utrecht: Uitgeverij Het Spectrum, 1977.

11. Meppel: J. A. Boom, 1973.

12. Reprinted in *De Ware Tijd*, May 25, 1978.

13. As the West Suriname project led to the confinement of local Amerindian tribes to restricted areas, affecting their traditional livelihood, there was little doubt as to responsibility for the incidents. The Amerindians in Apoera and elsewhere had repeatedly expressed their grievances and received a deaf ear (interview, Nardo Aluman, spokesman for the Tucayana Amazone Indians, July 18, 1990).

14. Reprinted in *De Ware Tijd*, May 25, 1978.

15. Ibid., June 14, 1979. The paper's formula for political theater: "a dash of sturdiness, with a knife point of humor; a spoonful of melodrama, and a cupful of menace." Ibid.

16. Kagie, 27.

17. Janssen, 143.

18. Roberto Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), esp. pt. 2. Short summaries of Michels's, Mosca's, and Pareto's work are found in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Crowell Collier Macmillan, 1968), vol. 10, 265-71 (Juan Linz on Roberto Michels), 504-06 (Mario Delle Piane on Gaetano Mosca), and vol. 11, 411-15 (Talcott Parsons on Vilfredo Pareto).

19. "Comment: In Defense of Democracy," *Caribbean & West Indies Chronicle*, Apr./May 1983, 2.



### 3

## The Coup: "*Leuk, Toch?*"

A first coup is like a first love...  
Love is true—love is blind  
Everything shines in a golden light  
Everything looks bright!

Thea Doelwijt and Henk Tjon  
*Ba Uzi*

The 1980 New Year's message of Parliament Chairman Emile Wijntuin was unusually sober:

Looking back at 1979, we have to admit that it has not been the year that brought us closer in national unity; it was not the year in which...the new Surinamer finally emerged. With all our hearts we had hoped that at the end of 1979 we could proudly say that production, devotion to duty, honesty, and love of country and people had risen. Alas, we have to record just the opposite: flight from Suriname, criminal assaults in the streets and even in the home, avoidance of work, and negativism in our development and conduct have been predominant."<sup>1</sup>

While many listening to his address undoubtedly recognized the stark truth of his words, few suspected that a kind of apocalypse was at hand.

What makes a definitive treatment of the origins of Suriname's military coup difficult is the careening course that government took under the military who made it happen. As those who were involved in or were early supporters of the coup pushed and tugged for control over the government, their depiction of events at the genesis of the coup became self-serving and hard to evaluate.

In broad outline, the events to be examined in this chapter include the military coup of February 25, 1980, led by Master Sergeant Desi Bouterse; institution of a civilian government under Bouterse's supervision that was led by physician Henk Chin A Sen; arrest of a number of rival military officers

and civilians on charges of plotting a (pro-Cuban) coup; suspension of the 1975 constitution in August 1980, closing of *Parlement*, and removal of Johan Ferrier from the presidency; followed by a zigzag path to anchor and legitimize the government in society.

On the face of it, such a brief chronology suggests powerhunger on the part of Bouterse and his fellow military officers. But that conclusion oversimplifies things. Despite his sometimes brutal and always unpredictable behavior, Bouterse still commanded the respect of many Surinamers. As pressure began to mount for Bouterse's removal and prosecution in 1990, Eddy Bruma defended him: "Desi is pragmatic and well-meaning. He loves his country and is not about to leave it."<sup>2</sup> A close look at his rhetoric and behavior will provide at least some confirmation of this unsettling fact and suggest a very complex and interesting figure. In the language of the preceding chapter, Bouterse is a classical example of a successful *ruziemaker*. But what does a "successful *ruziemaker*" become? Answer: an *oude rot*! The transformation was quick, even breathtaking.

## THE 1980 ELECTIONS

On the eve of the coup, the political atmosphere, as indicated in the previous chapter, was rife with frustration and cynicism. Still, as in some kind of primordial rite, hopeful speculation returned with the advent of another campaign and wishful calculations by all involved. The elections were scheduled for March 27, 1980. By late December, party leaders were meeting with their rank and file and among themselves to gear up for the event. Despite the long-simmering dispute between noncommissioned officers and their superiors in the Surinamese armed forces, the coming elections consumed most of the country's political attention. Through most of January, the month before the coup, I found the military conflict missing from the pages of *De Ware Tijd*, the country's leading daily newspaper. Instead, the paper's attention (and the nation's) was riveted on rumors regarding party maneuvers: the smaller parties looking for promising alliances and the major parties weighing their options in an effort to shore up their candidate lists.

The NPK leaders, believing that they needed to widen their base, held talks with several parties. Among those wooed unsuccessfully were the KTPI (which had walked out in 1978), the PL (allied in 1977 with the VDP), and the *Bosneger Eenheid Partij* (BEP, representing members of the country's several Bush Negro tribes). Talks with the two Indonesian parties were unsuccessful, and the NPS was left with the PSV and HPP (its earlier allies), together with the KTPI's defectors, now calling themselves the *Partai Pembangunan Rakyat Suriname* (Party for the Development of the People, PPRS).

Lachmon's VDP adjusted its lineup by dropping the flamboyant Henk

Herrenberg (while keeping its formal alliance with the minuscule SPS). In Herrenberg's place Lachmon was able to lure a former Creole ally, Hans Prade, a member of the *Staten* from 1969 to 1973. It is hard to figure the motive here except to assume that Herrenberg's radicalism was too much for the VHP hierarchy. Prade, no less fiery or outspoken than Herrenberg, was at least more moderate in his political positions. Dobru's PNR was also given several borderline places on the list—one for himself in District II (greater Paramaribo), and one for Frank Leeftang in District I (Paramaribo). The VDP also managed to hold on to Somohardjo and the PL while bringing his arch-rival, Willy Soemita, and the KTPI into the fold. Ties were also established with a Bush Negro party called *Wie Egie Boeskondrie Partij* (Our Own Bush Country Party), the *Nieuwe Democratische Partij* (led by businesswoman Denise de Hart), and a new *Chinese Politieke Partij*, though none of their members were given electable positions on the coalition's lists.

The other, more radical, wing of the PNR (led by Fred Derby) made an alliance with the PALU, calling it the PALU/PNR *Derde Front* (Third Front). Lie Pauw Sam's *Volkspartij*, eschewing alliances with the more formidable, established parties, nonetheless joined with the tiny *Indiaanse* [Amerindian] *Politieke Partij* and the BEP. Both of these groups provided the VP with an opportunity to raise issues regarding the despoliation of the country's interior and exploitation there of the native populations. The most curious of the small party alliance exercises was Humphrey Keerveld's effort to forge a tie between his (Marxist) DVF and the NPK. He was repeatedly rebuffed.

Party lists reflecting the various ties and the priority that parties had in each alliance were finally posted by February 10. *De Ware Tijd* had warned that preelection alliances with miniparties, which might then come to hold the balance of power in the system, were costing the system too much. Wasn't it time for the big parties to stop allowing themselves to be taken hostage like this? The sense of despair at another fundamentally polarized ethnic electoral conflict—between the NPS and VHP—led yet another prominent NPS member, the medical doctor Arti Jessurun, to call for a "national Cabinet" of the two biggest parties, whatever the outcome.

Nevertheless, all parties, in at least a token manner, had accepted the principle of multiethnic collaboration (consociational government). Even the small, more ideologically oriented parties were prepared to share power with the more ethnic-oriented coalitions, if they could just get a foothold in *Parlement*. Secretly advised, as several were, that a coup was in the making, their reaction was to stay on the electoral road, at least until it became a deadend.

Despite the disproportionate number of Hindustanis in the total (85 percent of 9,000) who had emigrated to The Netherlands since independence, *Vrije Stem*, predicted an outright victory for the VDP. The VP, it felt, was the only small party capable of taking one of the Paramaribo seats, but this would

be insufficient to give it any bargaining advantage in the new government.

As candidates began to hit the road with rallies throughout Paramaribo and the countryside, print shops and T-shirt designers rolled into high gear, producing campaign paraphernalia for all the parties. Then came the coup.

## SOMETHING BREWING IN THE BARRACKS

Reviewing the genesis of the coup in newspaper and other accounts, we find a variety of issues of concern. In the first place, there was a question of the military's mission in and for Surinamese society. On this point, some in The Netherlands as well as Suriname (including the professional noncommissioned officer corps, trained in The Netherlands) had visions of the military becoming a "development army," a force of able-bodied men and women who could be put to work on projects of infrastructural development, jobtraining, and even parastatal productive activity to contribute to and stimulate economic growth.<sup>3</sup>

One such advocate was Chas Mijnaals. After receiving advanced military training in The Netherlands in the early 1970s, Mijnaals and other young NCOs followed Suriname's politics closely through the idealistic lens of Dutch student radicalism. On their return in 1976, they organized a *belangen vereniging* (interest association) to push for a development army. There was one catch. The military would have to be reorganized. As they had been set up in 1975, Suriname's armed forces were no different from the Dutch-sponsored pre-independence "barracks army," whose principal mission was to provide border patrol and reinforcement for the police in politicoeconomic crises. In this sense, Mijnaals points out, there had been little change from the colonial *schutterij* (militia) of the slavery era.

A second issue was the marked discrepancy of income among the officer corps (commissioned and noncommissioned alike). All those individuals who had received training (or had served) in The Netherlands were given special salary inducements to return to Suriname. However, all *new* recruits (and NCOs) were paid on a much lower scale. The removal of discrepancies would probably take some time and leave considerable irritation in the ranks. Moreover, as Mijnaals points out, Dutch selection of Suriname's senior officers was done very carefully, so as to maximize loyalty to and dependency on The Netherlands (rather than Suriname). For commanding officer of the Suriname army, the Dutch picked Henk Elstak, "a de-Surinamized Surinamer," as Mijnaals put it. Neither Elstak, nor any of his top officers, was particularly bright or popular with the troops, according to Mijnaals.

A third issue derived from the first two. A barracks army is a show army, and the "show" requires an emphasis on discipline and appearance. But an officer corps constructed by outsiders for ulterior purposes, as Mijnaals

claimed it to be, would lack the authority to achieve either discipline or *esprit de corps*. By numerous accounts a kind of *kadaver-discipline* (extreme discipline) was being practiced: recruits were fined one-third their monthly salaries for infractions of the dress code (e.g., mud in the rise of the shoe, tarnish on the back of their belt buckle). Protesters might have their fines tripled and be locked up. NCOs were ignored and apparently became the most alienated of all. In Bouterse's own words,

We tried repeatedly to talk with the military leaders. But they had no understanding of the actual situation. It wasn't long before three-quarters of the army lost all interest in their duties. Morale sunk rapidly. One person began making sandwiches, the other something else. We all went into business [on the side]. I set up a fairly large pig and chicken farm. That meant extra income.<sup>4</sup>

It also meant a vicious circle of divided loyalties, overreaction, and growing alienation. The behavioral consequences were the military version of "*winti wai, lanti sa pai*."

These issues were brought together by the alienated NCOs into what became the fourth and pivotal issue—the organization of a labor union. In most countries of the world, such an organization (despite the existence of police or fire fighter unions) would be unthinkable. But not so in The Netherlands, where conscript unionization was an established fact.<sup>5</sup> In Suriname, the effort to organize a union had been under way almost since independence, first in the *Bond van Onderofficieren* (Union of Junior Officers), then in the *Bond van Militair Kader* (Union of Military Staff, BOMIKA). At no point were they given official recognition, and their demonstrations and other expressed demands for such recognition were met by disciplinary action.

In January 1979, on the arrest of Sgt. Ramon Abrahams, NCOs demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's office, standing in a long line along Gravenstraat at parade rest. A day later they were joined by other soldiers, and Abrahams was quickly released. Later the same month, another union leader, Laurens Neede, gave a critical radio interview that led to his arrest. Public outcry finally prompted Arron to install a commission to investigate the NCOs' grievances. This commission, chaired by a lawyer, O. W. Abendanon, and including prominent academics and lawyers, found that many of the grievances of the NCOs were justified, that the mission of the armed forces was ambiguous, and that a development function was indeed worth considering. It presented its findings to the government in the fall of 1979, but the report was immediately suppressed—adding yet another issue to the NCOs' list.<sup>6</sup>

How long was the coup being plotted? Mijns said he had been thinking of it ever since he returned to Suriname in 1976. Bouterse claimed to Jozef Slagveer that he had been working on it for over a year. In fact, there may have been three separate groups plotting such an event during the course of

1979. Such, at least, is the argument of Elma Verhey and Gerard Van Westerloo in *Het legergroene Suriname* (The Olive Green of Suriname).

One of these coup attempts was being organized by a Hindustani first lieutenant, Surindre Rambocus. Stationed near Suriname's international airport at Zanderij, Rambocus was in charge of military training. Verhey and Van Westerloo report that he planned a coup for July 1, 1980, the national holiday. Failure to detect (or recruit) sufficient support among the officer staff led him ultimately to turn for help to the NCOs at Zanderij, among whom was Bouterse.

A second plot was fashioned by Mijnals and his radical "civilian guru," Ruben Lie Pauw Sam. Its timetable was based upon political considerations: if the Creoles (NPK) won the March elections, the coup would take place two months later; if the Hindustanis (VDP) won, it would take place two *years* later (on the assumption, it seems, that they would need somewhat longer to discredit themselves). Whichever scenario was involved, a cache of stolen Uzis was provided. Bouterse was one of those who helped Mijnals get the weapons.

The third plot, Bouterse's own, included no officers and no one who was ideologically oriented. Tall and in excellent physical condition, Bouterse was a sports instructor—a seemingly unthreatening position in the eyes of the other two groups of plotters. Personable and popular among his fellow NCOs, he had been recruited as an occasional spokesperson for the embattled union movement. Informants spoke of him as "petit bourgeois," a "Junior Chamber of Commerce" type, interested in his pig and chicken farm and in selling pornographic materials that he received from friends in The Netherlands and Germany.

Why would Bouterse be interested in leading a coup? There is no answering this, for Bouterse's later answers were wrapped in an uncharacteristic rhetoric of "revolutionary necessity" almost totally at odds with his background and identity. Whatever his motives—and one cannot leave out the fear of being left behind—Bouterse put his forces together with great skill and remarkable luck.

The coup's almost clockwork precision has given rise to an additional theory—that the Dutch military attache, Col. Hans Valk, was the brains behind the coup. This charge led to his removal from the Dutch Embassy in Paramaribo later in 1980 and produced an official investigation. While Valk was cleared of the charge, there is no doubt that he and his staff were unhappy with the way Elstak was handling the Surinamese army and that he listened more closely to the complaints of the NCOs than their own superiors did. Evidence supportive of the "Valk thesis" is found in the glowing words that Bouterse later used regarding Valk's support and in their frequent meetings after the coup. Most likely, Valk was merely a highly placed and incautious bystander who inadvertently emboldened the plotters, then sought to help them

once it was clear how unprepared they were for their responsibilities.

### **STAATSGREEP OR INGREEP?**

On January 25, 1980, a group of BOMIKA members meeting in the NCOs' mess declared themselves "in action" against the military leadership, charging them, among other things, with planning to create disturbances on the eve of the March elections (presumably to allow Arron to suspend the elections). Sergeants Neede and Badrissein Sital were placed in custody, and Arron demanded proof of their charges. Neede answered that Arron would have to address his question to the union (granting it *de facto* recognition in the process) if he wanted the proof. Arron refused.

Efforts now were made to keep the strikers out of the barracks. When they managed to break in, military police proceeded to seal the barracks off, trapping the NCOs inside. Public protests in support of the strikers began to pour into Arron's office, but he stubbornly held firm, ordering the military and civilian police to clear the troublemakers out at gunpoint. Dutch journalist Henk Boom continues with the story:

At 3 P.M. all entrances to the Memre Boekoe Barracks were closed off. Civilian police, riot police, and military police ordered the striking NCOs to leave the barrack grounds. [As one of the strikers later put it,] "An end had suddenly come to the myth that the police would never use force against the military. I felt hurt and even cried at this humiliation done to me by the military commanders and the government. With our hands over our heads we were forced to leave the barracks. I'll never forget it."

The NCOs were obliged to leave the barracks but gathered [across the street] outside the Red Cross headquarters. There they sang the Surinamese national anthem. Tension mounted on all sides. Because they didn't have a permit for a public demonstration, they were now given five minutes to disperse.

As the surrounding troops cocked their weapons and prepared the tear gas that had been fetched from the police wagons, a number of citizens, among whom were [Henk] Herrenberg and [Andre] Kamperveen, placed themselves between both parties. To the displeasure of Police Commissioner Jimmy Walker, no shot was fired.<sup>7</sup>

Herrenberg and Kamperveen persuaded the NCOs to beat a retreat to a soccer stadium half a block away. In the process, military police arrested Ramon Abrahams as he tried to deposit his service revolver at the gate to the barracks. When he heard the order to use force to disperse the NCOs, 1st Lt. Michel van Rey was so upset that he tore the stars from his epaulets, stamped them into the ground, and went over to the NCOs.

*De Ware Tijd* wrote that the use of police against the strikers brought the conflict "to a new low point." Earlier in the month, policemen had demonstrated in solidarity with the military union. Now the Chief

Commissioner of Police was reported in a rage that his police *hadn't* followed his order to shoot. The paper criticized Arron for leading the union on, then turning back: another example of weak and indecisive leadership. As Fred Derby put it, "The government is engaged in a game of 'panic football.'"

BOMIKA members now camped in the nearby soccer stadium, later moving to the offices of the Catholic Teachers Union and then the General Union of Government Personnel, the latter building acquiring the name Fort Bomika. Sital and Neede were now placed under formal arrest, along with the third BOMIKA leader, Abrahams. Into their place at the head of the union stepped Chas Mijhals, Roy Horb, and Desi Bouterse. Somehow, while alternating with Mijhals as spokesmen and keeping the union activity going—marches through town, cultivation of relations with support groups—Horb and Bouterse accelerated preparations for a coup. Their work was not made easier by the military police. Though evidently unaware that a coup might be in the works, Elstak was still out to break the union, and military police conducted house searches at night, in hopes of catching one of the leaders.

The first hint of a compromise by the government came on February 11 with the rumor that Arron planned to replace Elstak with Police Commissioner Walker. Roy Horb, speaking for BOMIKA, protested that Walker would be no improvement, since he had given the order to fire on the strikers on January 30. Another rumor, reported February 12, said that Elstak might take an early retirement in November. But by this time, the court-martial of Neede, Sital, and Abrahams was in full preparation. As the trial began on February 20, with the prosecutor calling for ten-month sentences and summary discharge from the armed forces, large crowds appeared outside the courthouse to show their support for the three young officers. Even on the day of the coup, the early edition of *De Ware Tijd* reported that Arron's government might consider other roles (including development work) for the military, as well as the establishment of grievance procedures. But such concessions were too late by a hair!

The coup might have taken place on Friday night/Saturday morning, February 22/23, but for a barking dog. On that night, members of the sixteen-man commando unit organized by Bouterse tried to raid a weapons magazine, only to be discovered and chased off. Curiously, this event, reported to Arron and Elstak, made little impression. Thus, the conspirators were given a second chance. Two nights later, they took it.

At 2 A.M. on February 25, they seized the watch house at the entrance to the Memre Boekoe Barracks, killing the lieutenant on duty there. A police patrol sent to help the watch officer came under fire, and another man died. The barracks fell without further fighting, and Bouterse's men broke into the store of weapons there. Meanwhile, another group of commandos seized the marine base and took the two patrol boats there out onto the river. At 4 A.M.

they fired two rounds at the roof of the police headquarters on the waterfront in downtown Paramaribo. Bouterse was later asked if he knew that the trial defendants (Sital, Neede, and Abrahams) had been moved there from their prison outside of town. Bouterse's answer was grim: "This was my hardest decision during the coup. I was sorry that I might have to sacrifice Neede, Sital, and Abrahams. *This is all in the game*; I thought. I was overwhelmed by it, *but there was no way out!*"<sup>8</sup>

In fact, Bouterse ordered a second round of fire into the building several hours later, to assure its total destruction. By that time, the police had been able to get everyone out, including the prisoners. Still, casualties fell in the shooting here and at the munitions bunker (which they finally seized with the use of armored cars). Rather than see the violence escalate further, Commissioner Walker surrendered, and by midday the fighting had ended.

In their first communique, the new military rulers stated:

Never, ever would things have gone so far if:

1. Healthy understanding had prevailed over rancor, hatred, and arrogance;
2. The Arron cabinet and the military leadership had not chosen a poisonous and criminal form of confrontation;
3. Some hearing was given to the countless proposals for discussing a solution to the problems.<sup>9</sup>

At 7:30 P.M., Tuesday, February 26, Vice Premier Olton van Genderen and Soerdj Badrisingh, Minister of Justice and Police, formally turned the government over to the military and urged the population to cooperate with the new rulers in the interest of peace and order. Official sources reported that the sixteen commandos and the troops they led suffered no casualties. Dutch newspapers were quoted as saying "*leuk, toch!*" (neat, eh?) regarding the coup's efficiency. Troubled as the society might be, there was still a civilized innocence that set it apart from other Caribbean or Latin American states. But was the coup really so "neat"? After all, five persons had been killed before the police finally surrendered, more than had fallen in all Suriname's civil disturbances since the 1930s.

Of more practical consequence, Surinamers now asked themselves if this was to be an *ingreep* (intervention) of a very temporary sort, a *staatsgreep* (*coup d'état*) of more lasting character, or something even more far-reaching. The first communique suggested an *ingreep*. But its authors, Laurens Neede and Badrissein Sital, were in fact committed revolutionaries.

## ANY SUGGESTIONS?

Public reaction took many forms. *Vrije Stem* greeted the news with this headline: "*EINDELIIJK!*" (Finally!) Although it had previously criticized the

NCOs for their unionizing efforts, its editors commented that "The great majority of the population supports this coup because they feel that we had totally run aground in the old politics." *De Ware Tijd* was more circumspect. A majority of Surinamers, it wrote, had reacted passively toward the coup. Although the paper was relieved that race was not involved in the events leading up to the coup, it noted that over 300 Surinamers fled to French Guiana on news of the coup and warned that revolution and dictatorship were possible consequences that should be guarded against.

From The Netherlands came the most warnings: Dutch Development Cooperation Minister Jan Pronk predicted that "the use of violence to overthrow a government can only have the effect of inviting fresh violence"; the *Algemeen Dagblad* warned that the coup might spur an even higher level of outmigration from Suriname; and Rudi Kross, a Surinamese journalist living in The Netherlands, asked what guarantee there was that the new officials would be more accountable than the *oude boeven* (old rascals) they had just cleared out.

Boom writes that one could already find signs of tension among the NCOs on the first day, as they argued over whether to call their ruling body the Revolutionary Council or the National Military Council (NMR). The arrested union leaders advocated the former but were forced by Bouterse and Horb to settle for the latter. Boom writes that although confrontation could already be seen between the coup organizers (Bouterse and Horb) and the union organizers (Sital, Neede, and Abrahams), it would only be much later that any of them would portray the coup as a "popular uprising."

Indeed, the young officers were careful to demonstrate their respect for the constitution and for the position of the President, Johan Ferrier. Partly this may be credited to the two men who had been involved with organizing and defending BOMIKA in the courts, Frank Leeftang and Eddy Bruma. Carefully denying any involvement in the coup, Leeftang and Bruma quickly showed up at the Memre Boekoe Barracks to offer their advice to the country's new leaders. The NMR's subsequent statements, says Boom, had the tact and scope that only lawyers could provide: guaranteeing the safety of people's property and possessions as well as the interests of foreign investors, and respecting the principles of the United Nations and the International Declaration of Human Rights.

Leaders of the other small radical parties were quick to come forward, presumably on the NMR's assumption that they and the party leaders could put together a *burgerraad*, or citizens council, to provide joint military-civilian government. Bruma said that a "*burgerraad-militaire raad*" would "require at least four years in power" in order to carry out a number of unpopular measures to straighten out the political system. But if Bruma harbored any ideas of being the kingpin of this new government, his image as an *oude rot* caught up with him. Bruma was politically "*uitgespeeld*" (finished), said Lie

Pauw Sam, and in any case the new government should not be tainted by past politics. Bruma's old PNR labor colleague, Fred Rusland, and Edward Naarendorp, a member of Lie Pauw Sam's VP, agreed, the latter especially condemning Bruma's recent association with Lachmon. In the ranks of the military, Lieutenant Van Rey and BOMIKA leader Laurens Neede had, according to Andre Haakmat, favored Bruma's becoming Prime Minister. But this was bitterly opposed by NMR Chairman Sital, Mijnals (a VP member), and Sgt. Stanley Joeman, all of whom agreed with Lie Pauw Sam's characterization of Bruma as "finished."

A third faction, consisting of Bouterse and Horb, supported some sort of compromise candidacy. For them it was important to appease Dutch and local public opinion. This could be done only by getting a sign of approval from President Johan Ferrier, whose position had been untouched in the coup. If he could be seen as willing to work with the NMR, then Bruma's efforts to lure a few prominent community members into the Cabinet would be facilitated. These three- or four-way negotiations dragged out the process of government formation. Meanwhile, the NMR provided itself a range of radical opinion by setting up a political advisory board consisting of Lie Pauw Sam, Fred Derby, Iwan Krolis (PALU), and the progressive (but unaffiliated) law professor Harvey Naarendorp. It also consulted with Andre Kamperveen, Henk Herrenberg, Denise de Hart, and Jozef Slagveer, who were among the many to offer their services immediately after the coup.

The public saw a fair amount of "the boys" (*de jongens*) during these formative days. They appeared almost nightly on the television news, and they came across as intense, sincere, and high-minded. Their methods were not very gentle, however. When youths caught looting in the business district after the coup were brought to the base, they were photographed half-naked while being whipped. In the context of Tehran's more frenetic revolutionary justice at the same time in history, this may have seemed a tolerable excess. But no excess can be prevented from giving precedent. In The Netherlands, the first outcry against human rights violations quickly followed this event, and fears of such treatment made it harder to get public cooperation from members of the old regime. Nevertheless, Bishop Aloysius Zichem arranged for the surrender of Prime Minister Henk Arron and a number of his ministers after obtaining guarantees of their safety from the new leaders. They were placed under house arrest.

Despite the criticisms made of Bruma, he and Leeftang were invited by the military to form a government. Although Bruma later asserted that he was able to get the Cabinet together from his law office within forty-eight hours, there were still a number of obstacles to having it accepted by President Ferrier and the military. On March 3, some ground rules were finally agreed upon: the elections scheduled for March 27 would be postponed to a later date, constitutional amendments would be adopted only after public

referendum, and the armed forces and police would be under the control of the NMR. A "civilian government" would be instituted (as opposed to the NMR's preferred "civilian council"), but it would consult with the NMR regularly. Henk Boom interpreted this, on balance, as a victory for Ferrier over the more radical elements in the military.<sup>10</sup> Mijns, for example, had earlier told Boom that there should be no return to the old system. What was needed was a people's democracy (*volksdemocratie*), not democracy for the benefit of a certain clique.<sup>11</sup> Thus the new government merely constituted a tactical truce between the Bouterse/Bruma group and its Mijns/Sital counterpart. Meanwhile, energies shifted to different activities.

The anxieties of sweeping change were sometimes accompanied by rather funny situations. Take the *zeven-even* problem. Government workers are notorious for signing in at 7 A.M., then leaving (most likely to go to another job) for the rest of the day. The NMR now ordered "inspections" at government offices to catch late comers and absentees. In the unprecedented work attendance that followed, it was revealed that there were far too few desks to accommodate those on the payroll in each office.

The curfew also had its effects. Movie theaters, bars, and houses of prostitution all lost revenues. Doctors predicted a wave of births sometime in November, and Radio Radica noted that the legal paternity of the "November children" would be less open to question than was generally the case. Herman Hennink Monkau, commenting on the fact that wives, not mistresses (*vrouwen*, not *buitenvrouwen*), would be seeing their husbands in the evening for a change, commented: "What a twist! Don't go forth, but multiply!"<sup>12</sup>

A freshly installed "suggestion box" on the gate of the Memre Boekoe Barracks was much commented upon as a sign of the new rulers' innocent openness. But from day one, the NCOs had become power brokers, like it or not. The long stream of visitors, representing some of the country's most powerful interests, as well as the humblest, gave the NMR a crash course in juggling and handling pressure. It also revealed grievances and needs that far exceeded those leading to the coup.

## THE *INGREEP* IN ACTION

On March 14, 1980, President Johan Ferrier announced that a popular surgeon, Henk Chin A Sen, would become the new Prime Minister, restoring a civilian face to Surinamese government. Most members of the Cabinet were young professionals, politically inexperienced or unaffiliated. Yet they were not entirely apolitical. Bruma and Leeftang, the *formateurs*, managed to get four members of the PNR on it: Chin A Sen (who had been a PNR candidate in Nickerie in 1973), Robin (Dobru) Ravales (leader of the moderate wing of the PNR and a Member of Parliament in 1973-77), Harold Rusland (from the

Derby wing, who had also been an M.P. in the first Arron government), and co-*formateur* Frank Leeftang. By this selection, Bruma appeared to be trying to heal the breach in the PNR and position it to replace the NPS as the dominant Creole party in Suriname. But junior Cabinet posts also went to SSU leader Andre Kamperveen and to Ms. Siegmien Power-Staphorst, who had been a candidate of the VP in both 1977 and 1980. Two military men were included in the Cabinet: Laurens Neede, to head the police, and Michel van Rey, as Minister of the Army.

In the speech-making that accompanied installation of the Chin A Sen cabinet, President Ferrier urged Surinamers to work for *verzoening* (reconciliation). The NMR, he said, had pledged to respect the constitution, and their word should be accepted. The timetable for restoration of democracy was now a bit shorter: one and a half to two years. Echoing the earlier criticisms of the West Suriname Project by the Council of Christian Churches, Chin A Sen said that human needs would be foremost in his government's development planning but that, at the same time, the consciousness of the people must be raised. On this point, he sounded no different from Arron, Speaker Wijntuin, or the newspaper editorials over the past four years. *De Ware Tijd* reacted sympathetically but added that a people can go only so far with a gun at their backs. The sooner the military got its job done and restored democracy, the better.

While signs of revolutionary agendas were already evident in some of the early proclamations of the NMR, the term "revolutionary" was not yet officially embraced. Instead, "intervention" (*ingreep*) was used, implying that the promised housecleaning and refocusing of policy was no more than an interlude before the return of democratically organized government. This, I believe, was clearly the vision of Chin A Sen. But a majority in the NMR was far from agreeing, though this was obscured to some extent by internal discussion and intramural struggle over lesser issues.

The NMR's disarray, and the apparent support of Desi Bouterse and Roy Horb for the more moderate direction envisaged by Chin A Sen, seemed to give the latter all the room he needed for programmatic action. He was an energetic and quick learner, tackling the issues of development, social welfare, housing, and his own specialty, health care. Yet, as he and his Cabinet got down to work, the NMR launched a project of their own—one that would serve them for much longer than the *ingreep*.

Even before the announcement of the new Cabinet, the NMR had "taken to the streets," so to speak, through televised meetings with the people in the neighborhoods, villages, and factory yards of Suriname. Wherever they went, they sought out supporters and laid the foundations for *burger-* (later *volks-*) *comites*. The idea for these citizens' (or people's) committees clearly originated in the political experience of Nicaragua, Grenada, and Cuba, each determined to defend its revolution. Badrissein Sital, the NMR's head, and

Chas Mijns, his assistant, were both well-educated politically and impressed by the spread of popular change in the Caribbean Basin. (Before the coup, Mijns had been a member of the VP and a part-time law student at the university. When I interviewed him in 1990, I was struck by the number of Cuban posters and photographs of Che Guevara on his walls, and his articulate reflections on economic and political imperialism.)

There should be no doubt that the events in Nicaragua and Grenada in 1979 had as dramatic an effect on leftist groups in the Caribbean as the later events in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in 1989 had on dissident groups throughout the Soviet bloc. By the accepted wisdom of 1979, the path to support and defend a (hoped-for) revolution must include energetic teaching and organizational work at the grass roots. According to Stan Verschuuren, this "BOMIKA group" quickly established contact with Cuba and Nicaragua.<sup>13</sup> In any event, the organization of *burgercomites* proceeded apace, reaching several dozen by the end of April, in time to provide critical support for (and pressure on) Chin A Sen.

On May Day, Chin A Sen presented his government's program. It was still far from the radical document that the NMR would have preferred. In it, Chin A Sen pledged his government to "the four renewals":

- Renewal of the political/administrative order
- Renewal of the social order
- Renewal of the educational order
- Renewal of the socioeconomic order.

As Henk Chin and Hans Buddingh' summarized it:

The declaration formulated a number of major points concerning the political/administrative order. A constitutional commission was to study the possible need for constitutional amendments. The drafting of a bill on political parties was announced, which was to redress the errors of the old system and, among other things, guarantee internal democracy under the party system. The voting age was to be lowered from 21 to 18. The formation of district councils to promote regional democracy was announced, a major improvement in a country that had always been administered from Paramaribo. According to the government's programme, functional (social) groups were also to be involved in policy-making. A special court of law was to be set up to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption from the pre-coup period. The civil service was to be purged of corrupt officials.... The government was even ready with a date for a general election: "Barring unforeseen circumstances, new elections can be expected around October 1982." The programme inspired confidence, both within Surinam and abroad.<sup>14</sup>

One can see the vision behind this: of a Suriname less dominated by ethnic parties, political bosses, and the concentrated power of the urban area, one in

which higher standards of conduct and wider (especially younger) participation were encouraged.

A week after the May Day declaration, Ruben Lie Pauw Sam saw his party sundered by a mass walkout. The defectors announced formation of the *Revolutionaire Volkspartij* (RVP) and planned to give their full support to the NMR. Lie Pauw Sam, said a spokesman for the RVP, had not taken "the correct revolutionary position" either at the time of the coup or in more recent decisions. Among his apparent "errors" were his opposition to the timing of the coup in February and his support for VP member Michel van Rey as Minister of the Army in Chin A Sen's Cabinet. Van Rey, it later turned out, had fought against the idea of direct military rule and of revolutionary change, and had warned of the rising influence of Cuba sympathizers Edward Naarendorp, Fred Derby, and Henk Herrenberg. Under the influence of the Cuban Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana, they were pushing hard for a military dictatorship, according to Van Rey. Mijnals and Sital had some influence of their own in the ranks of the VP and encouraged the creation of the RVP.

It was a time of great contrast, excitement, and uncertainty. On April 18, Thea Doelwijt and Henk Tjon opened their new musical cabaret show *Ba Uzi* (Brother Uzi). Inspired by the coup, it combined the exhilaration of revolutionary possibility with some worried premonitions. Excerpts:

Sergeant (holding Uzi): ...We are in command—Now we are the masters and everything is our business!

Woman: But look what's in your hands. I think he's the master.

Sergeant: Don't be a fool like that. You have not understood the message—Go and listen to him, talk with him—BA UZI is waiting for you—longing for you.

Woman: BA UZI, I don't know you. Who are you? BA UZI? Every day I see you walking in the streets. You are always there...like a shadow...

Sergeant: Feel how strong he is. BA UZI is a friend. He wants to fight for you. He wants to make a better country for us all.

....

Woman: But BA UZI is just a gun. A servant—a willing instrument. BA UZI obeys everybody who gets hold of him. Don't trust him. He is everybody's friend. Today he is on your side. Tomorrow he turns against you. We never get rid of him!<sup>15</sup>

Henk Tjon recalls that on opening night in the Thalia Theater, a group of military bodyguards arrived to take up positions at all the doors and at various spots backstage, including up in the skywalks. Looking out into the audience during the performance Tjon saw that NCOs occupied the first two rows of seats, most with Uzis resting on their knees. Somehow they managed to enjoy the performance and allowed it to continue the two weeks of its run. (It was later performed in The Netherlands and throughout the Caribbean.)

Still, it was not long after this that Suriname's military reported its first countercoup attempt. Like a number of subsequent violent incidents, this one

was shrouded in secrecy. What we do know is that on Saturday morning, May 3, the body of Fred Ormskerk, a Surinamese ex-officer of the Dutch military, was delivered to the Academic Hospital. The military claimed that he had tried to organize an invasion of mercenaries through French Guiana to overthrow the government. Rudy Kagie writes that Ormskerk thought he could utilize his favorable reputation among the soldiers to be accepted, like De Gaulle, as their new leader.<sup>16</sup> Whether in fact there *was* a mercenary force is still not known. Only Ormskerk and a local acquaintance, Joop Krol, were arrested initially. And because their names were written on a scrap of paper found in Ormskerk's pocket, the military subsequently arrested three NPS legislators (Rufus Nooitmeer, Otmar Rodgers, and Theo Bean). According to several informants, they were tortured.

News reporters were summoned to Memre Boekoe, where, after waiting most of the night, they were sharply lectured on how to write their accounts of the affair. Most backed away from the story altogether. Kagie's own experience was more unnerving. Personally invited to an interview with the NMR leadership regarding the affair, Kagie found himself crossexamined by a cursing, screaming Stanley Joeman (from the Sital/Mijnals faction in the NMR) who demanded to know his sources and told him how terrible his reporting was. Kagie, whose writing had generally been very supportive of the military, left the session badly shaken.<sup>17</sup> Like determined visionaries, Mijnals and Sital intensified their work, creating people's committees and warning incessantly about the threat of invasion and counterrevolution.

## THE TRICKY FOOTWORK TO POWER

Shortly after this, Michel van Rey became the first political victim of the military's infighting. As Minister of the Army, he had taken the occasion of Chin A Sen's May Day speech to press for the abolition of the NMR's special privileges (e.g., chauffeured limousines). Andre Haakmat states that the leftist majority in the NMR wanted half the Cabinet positions in military hands, collective (i.e., NMR) leadership over the armed forces, and abolition of the officer class. Ferrier's opposition to these changes had been backed by Van Rey and Bouterse. But when Van Rey told Bouterse to withdraw the special privileges, the latter informed the NMR leaders, and they told Chin A Sen to remove Van Rey. When word reached him of these machinations, Van Rey fled to the United States. Bouterse was clearly learning the art of divide and conquer.

In the context of rising tensions and the threat of corruption overtaking the NMR's revolutionary principles, Humphrey Keerveld (of the Marxist DVF) asked, at a press conference, how Chin A Sen and the NMR planned to handle the problem of *foetoebois* and opportunists "who were nesting in the bosom

of the military and threatened to derail the revolution." Press Secretary Jozef Slagveer, well known as a good investigative journalist, warned Keerveld and others in the press not to damage the revolution by reckless reporting. *De Ware Tijd* reporter Leslie Rahman asked for the government's definition of "*sociale rechtvaardigheid*" (social justice), and Slagveer snapped at him, "Look in a dictionary." Mijnals gave the press this slippery guidance: "As long as it's in the service of the revolution, your criticism is permitted."<sup>18</sup>

The climax of the revolutionary movement, at least at this stage, came in early July 1980, when Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation Jan de Koning came to Suriname to explore the new directions sought by the Chin A Sen government. Chin A Sen presented him with an *urgentieplan* (crash program), and demanded that the unspent monies in the development agreement be made *waardevast* (adjusted for inflation). De Koning could make no promises and lamely kept reiterating his government's eagerness to see democracy restored. Compounding the difficulties of negotiation, the military organized daily demonstrations in support of Chin A Sen's demands—the last one, on July 3, drawing between 10,000 and 30,000 participants. Mijnals rashly threatened not to let De Koning leave the country until he agreed to the demands.

Explaining that their work as Commander and Under Commander of the Army consumed all their time, Desi Bouterse and Roy Horb took this occasion to resign their positions in the NMR. In hindsight, we can guess at the reasons for this. Dutch unhappiness with the regime's radicalism might lead to a total cutoff of aid. There may also have been a nervous nod toward the United States after the NMR's leaders accepted an invitation from Nicaragua to attend the first anniversary of the Sandinista revolution. The most likely reason, however, was the long-term calculation that line officers (the Commander and his deputy) could potentially marshal more power than their busy rivals.

One of Bouterse's first actions after leaving the NMR's executive was to demand (and hold) elections in the NMR. Sital, just back from Managua, was forced to step down as chairman of that body, and Mijnals was elected in his place. Watching Bouterse introduce the new council, as I did on July 31, 1980, on Suriname TV, one saw a charming, confident, and determined leader surrounded by a group of almost tongue-tied, defeated individuals. Bouterse dominated the proceedings entirely.<sup>19</sup>

The line officers put a definitive end to their rivalry with the NMR two weeks later. Claiming that Sital, Mijnals, Joeman, and a number of RVP civilians had met in a hotel room in Leonsberg (just outside of Paramaribo) to plan a coup, Bouterse had them all arrested August 13. At the same time, he suspended the 1975 constitution, dissolved the *Parlement* and Advisory Council, and restored the curfew. It is hard to determine which of these two sets of actions was more important. Surely the rivalry between Bouterse and the NMR was getting worse. But a conflict was also looming between the

government, on the one hand, and the President and Parliament, on the other. *Parlement* traditionally opened its session in September with the President's presentation of the government program and budget. Now that the executive no longer emerged from the legislature, there was no telling what difficulties might arise between the two bodies. President Ferrier had insisted on observing the September formalities. Thus, the "coup within a coup" left him no choice but to submit his resignation.

It was a dramatic show of strength for Desi Bouterse, and even though Henk Chin A Sen now took the double position of Prime Minister and President, his power seemed problematic compared with that demonstrated by his military "ally." The new President quickly asserted himself, assuring the public that elections would still be held by the end of 1982 and appointing a five-man Constitutional Commission to produce a new constitution "that reflected the aspirations of the whole people."<sup>20</sup> To strengthen a Cabinet already weakened by some departures and a noticeable lack of leadership, Chin A Sen appointed his old friend Andre Haakmat, a brilliant lawyer in the Dutch Ministry of Education, to the posts of Vice Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Army and Police.

Bouterse was not looking for any further confrontations. He *did* continue the NMR's mobilization program and speeded it up, calling the *volkscomites* "the roots of the revolution." The NMR too was permitted to continue, its chairman now a Bouterse protege, Lt. Iwan Graanoogst. With Andre Haakmat drafting the language, and Chin A Sen and Bouterse suggesting the subjects, decrees were issued right and left. After the courts freed a number of suspects in the corruption cases from the Arron government, Bouterse ordered their rearrest, and asked Haakmat to lay the foundations for a special tribunal to try them. (There must have been some interesting encounters in the prisons at Santo Boma and Fort Zeelandia, where some of the NMR/RVP radicals found themselves in the same cells as the allegedly corrupt members of the establishment.) Nevertheless, it appears that neither set of arrests was warranted, and the treatment the arrestees received was vindictive and cruel.<sup>21</sup>

In October 1980, Haakmat traveled to the United States in his capacity as Foreign Minister. There he met with Secretary of State Edmund Muskie and explained the developments in his country. Echoing Chin A Sen, Haakmat promised a return to democracy, though he foresaw a different kind of national assembly—one with functional groups (e.g., business, labor) being represented instead of the ethnic political parties. The new constitution, he assured Muskie, would be approved in a national referendum.

Through the fall and winter of 1980-81, Surinamers may have gotten the impression of a kind of Thermidorian calm and order. The courts were particularly busy. Trials were held for the prisoners in the Ormskerk affair, the radical coup-within-a-coup group, and the government/business corruption cases. While almost all the defendants were found guilty by the judges, a

number of my informants asserted that most of the judges were either scared or lax, giving in to the demands of the military. One of the judges, O. W. Abendanon (former chairman of the BOMIKA investigation), resigned on principle rather than see the laws of evidence violated.

In the case of the Sital *et al* conspiracy, defense attorney John Baboeram summarized the conflict within the military as follows: Bouterse wanted to bring in progressives from the NPS and PNR while retaining the existing military structure he now controlled. The NMR opposed both of these ideas. A meeting in Leonsberg on August 5 (at which the supposed plot was hatched) was merely an informal discussion between civilian and military leftists. The state's witness, NMR member John Hardjoprajitno, had come late to the meeting, Baboeram said, and misrepresented what had gone on as a conspiracy. Though the prosecution had only Hardjoprajitno's testimony to work with, all the defendants were found guilty. Mijns and Sital received sentences of two years; Joeman and Michael Naarendorp (RVP), one year; and the others (all civilian RVP members), six months. Before their trial, Bouterse had been quoted as saying, "They deserve to be shot."<sup>22</sup>

## IN AND OUT AND IN

The political career of Andre Haakmat was almost as brief and colorful as the NMR's. Though born in Suriname, Haakmat had lived for some years in Amsterdam, where he was an inspector of schools. Called back to Suriname by his friend Chin A Sen, he had served as an adviser for several months before becoming "Superminister" (as the press put it) following the August coup.<sup>23</sup> As he plunged into the thicket of issues, intrigues, and personalities at the center of power, his own appetite was clearly whetted.

In his role of Deputy Prime Minister (in addition to his other titles), Haakmat could help Chin A Sen on a whole range of issues. But his strong personality allegedly made him difficult to work with. He was particularly impatient with the bureaucratic delays and/or noncompliance with the pace of reform. Perhaps without realizing it, he had begun to fill the role that Sital and Mijns had performed earlier, generating friction with both Chin A Sen and Bouterse. In a radio interview on January 5, 1981, Haakmat spoke very critically of the government: "The people want to do something about their condition, but it would be good if there were a government that was convinced of the need to bring about social justice....And I'll say quite freely that I don't see in the present government the instrument to...bring about that social revolution."<sup>24</sup>

Hardly had the interview concluded than Laurens Neede, Underminister of the Army, showed up at the studios to demand a copy of the tape. After listening to it "repeatedly," Chin A Sen told Neede that Haakmat must go:

"It's either Andre or me!" The next day, at a formal meeting of the Cabinet and NMR in the Presidential Palace, Haakmat was accused of sowing dissension between the government and the military. Thus, after just under five months as "Superminister," Haakmat was out. Roy Horb visited him shortly after this showdown and assured him that Chin A Sen was surely "going to break his neck, and you'll be back again."<sup>25</sup>

### **VERBROEDERING IN ARMS?**

The almost arbitrary manner in which political winds shifted is illustrated by the effort Bouterse made at this time to take over the NPS with the help of the anti-Arron forces in the party. It is a complicated story. As Haakmat departed the scene, Chin A Sen and the NMR approached the VHP for support, Roy Horb specifically inviting top VHP lieutenant Ram Sardjoe to meet with him in January. The VHP offered its support *only* on condition that the NPS be involved, too. This meant releasing Arron and Van Genderen from house arrest and prison, respectively. Horb agreed, and a meeting between the VHP and NPS leaders was held in Sardjoe's house on February 26. It was, Sardjoe told me, the rebirth of the *verbroedering* coalition. The VHP could explore the opportunities to exert influence over the Chin A Sen government and help the (mostly Creole) military try to improve its relationship with the Hindustani community; but open support by the VHP would be withheld.

Bouterse was cool to the move and eager to explore a project of his own: to replace Arron as head of the NPS. Friends were assuring him that he could win a national election, but a political base other than the military would be important. Despite some encouragement from anti-Arron elements in the NPS, the resistance there was too great. In fact, even his overall popularity was now questionable.<sup>26</sup>

### **AND NOW THE RADICAL PATH**

Perhaps more as a reaction to these rebuffs than out of conscious reflection, Bouterse chose the path of radicalism. By unifying the fragmented Left, perhaps he could provide the popular base he needed. He began to speak of foreign capital as the country's "greatest enemy," and attacked the press for undermining the revolution. Radio, television, and the print media should be placed under one person, "who shall direct them according to the terms of the government's program." His second in command, Horb, told a group organizing the coup's first anniversary celebration, "We choose the same road as the Surinamese leaders Anton de Kom and [Louis] Doedel [labor leaders in

the 1930s]. Not for the people in Oase and Het Park [two elite clubs in Paramaribo], but in the places where people are suffering, without food or clothing—that's where we'll bring the revolution."<sup>27</sup>

This new, more radical style of rhetoric from the military is credited partly to Haakmat's replacement at the Foreign Ministry, Harvey Naarendorp, a professor of law at the University of Suriname. According to Verhey and Van Westerloo, Naarendorp was instrumental in introducing Bouterse to Prime Minister Maurice Bishop of Grenada.<sup>28</sup> Bouterse is said also to have been given a crash course in radicalism by Rita Chin A Loi, a member of the RVP and his intimate companion. But the single most important source of this new orientation was Bouterse's ongoing contact with his prisoners, Mijns and Sital.

With an eye, perhaps, to grafting Sital into the leadership of the VHP with himself as leader of the NPS, Bouterse was in frequent telephone contact with the prisoners, finally working out a kind of *modus vivendi* that gave them their freedom in exchange for an acceptance of his authority. With the exception of Sital, who became Minister of Public Health, they were given little important to do. Yet at their release in early March, they enjoyed a bizarre sort of "welcome home" reception. Bouterse, who in August had been quoted as saying, "They deserve to be shot," now appeared at a press conference with "my brother and comrade-in-arms" (Mijns), emphasizing that Suriname was now headed toward "many difficulties" not unlike those that confronted Cuba and Nicaragua.

"We have stooped long enough beneath the yoke of capitalism," he continued. "We are obliged, no doomed [*sic*] to come out on the socialist side. We're all striving for a socialistic society in which there is work for us all, where social justice reigns, and in which there is no longer any poverty, exploitation, racism and oppression."<sup>29</sup> Sital added his own comments: "If you want to bring about change, you have to use everything, including force, if need be....I am no man of compromises—a real revolutionary makes no compromises. But we have always worked on the basis of ideology and the wish to serve the collective interest."<sup>30</sup>

This sort of rhetoric suggests opportunism on Bouterse's part (a kind of ideological outbidding to appease his victimized colleagues) and sincere evangelism on behalf of the latter (still out to convert their "unwashed" tormentor). Privately, Chin A Sen claimed that the release of the radicals had come as a complete surprise. He had wanted to resign but was prevented by members of his Cabinet. Confusion and paranoia competed in the minds of both the leadership and the public. Mijns warned of attack from abroad at any time, and Chin A Sen expressed his continuing preoccupation with Haakmat and some of his friends. A few weeks after the prisoners' release, the newspapers reported that military units had nipped another countercoup in the bud—this one also coming from within the military but involving a

member of the original sixteen commandos, Wilfred Hawker. He was taken into custody, and his driver was killed. Was this another make-believe coup?

## COMMENTARY

Despite the public euphoria that greeted the February 25 coup (and seemed willing to minimize NCO responsibility for the death and destruction accompanying it), those who had reservations soon began to find ample reasons for their fears. Delay in assembling the civilian government hinted at fundamental disagreements in the NMR. The Ormskerk affair, its arrests, and the arrests of those suspected of corrupt practices aroused fears that due process and the protection of human rights no longer existed. As Andre Haakmat commented, "The civilian government had authority but no power, while a united NMR [after August 13] had power but no authority."<sup>31</sup> These fears were heightened by the "purges" of August 13, and the ousters of Haakmat and others from the Cabinet made it clear that policy continuity (even in a reform direction) took a backseat to the struggle for power.

A Latin American diplomat commented that Suriname's coup (quite unlike those elsewhere in the region) was marked by "Dutch efficiency."<sup>32</sup> But it was also marked by an amazing degree of innocence, even granting the possibility that it had been in the works for months or longer. In this sense, it was as American as those of its neighbors—resting on selfish, shortsighted grudges and gratifications. The talents and skills of Surinamers, which are very considerable, can generate immense conflict when there is an absence of consensual purposefulness. Perhaps there was purposefulness among a few of the coup leaders, such as Sital and Mijnsals. But where social visions and personal agendas conflict, the result can only be damaging to leaders and society alike.

Just one of the measures of this damage can be found in the figures on migration. In the wake of Bouterse's "coup within a coup," the estimate by the Dutch Embassy of the number of Surinamers emigrating to The Netherlands was 37,000.<sup>33</sup> The cause for this was not entirely the uncertain political climate; this was also the last year of the five-year period of migration possibilities under a visa-free program instituted at the time of independence. Whatever their motives, those leaving certainly far exceeded those returning home. With as many as 200,000 Surinamers now in The Netherlands (over a third of the country's population), leaders had to play to—and guard against—multiple audiences at home and abroad. Easily spooked by the feeling that outsiders might be behind even minor confrontational events, Bouterse and the others became their own—and their country's—worst enemies.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in *Suriname Nieuwsbrief* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 5-12, 1980): 8-9.
2. Interview, July 30, 1990.
3. Chas Mijns, interview, Paramaribo, Aug. 3, 1990. Verhey and van Westerloo suggest that the Dutch government had at one time favored such a role for the military (35).
4. Willem Oltmans, *In gesprek met Desi Bouterse* (Amsterdam: Jan Mets, 1984), 10-11. Indications of Elstak's frustrations may be found in a lengthy interview with Nel Bradley in *De Ware Tijd*, June 29, 1977.
5. Rob Kroes, "De staatsgreep in Suriname: Achtergronden en gevolgen," *International Spectator* 35 (May 1981): 274.
6. The text of the Abendanon report (with background information) is provided in Jozef Slagveer, *De nacht van de revolutie: de staatsgreep in Suriname op 25 februari 1980* (Paramaribo: C. Kersten, 1980), 107-208. Further background is provided by Henk Boom, *Staatsgreep in Suriname: De opstand van de sergeanten op de voet gevolgd* (Utrecht: L. J. Veen, 1982), 47-53. One member of the Abendanon Commission proposed that the military be abolished altogether. He was overruled by the others.
7. Boom, 60-61.
8. Slagveer, 69 (italicized passages spoken in English).
9. Boom, 140. The communique went on to institute a curfew, warn citizens to stay off the streets and in their homes, and assure them of the military's commitment to the rule of law, equal rights, and a new moral reorientation in social and economic development.
10. *Ibid.*, 171-72.
11. *Ibid.*, 174.
12. Herman Hennink Monkau, *Sranang: 25 februari-3 maart 1980* (Paramaribo: Inalca, 1980), 25.
13. Stan Verschuuren, *Suriname: Geschiedenis in hoofdlijnen* (Utrecht: H&S, 1987), 113.
14. Henk E. Chin and Hans Buddingh', *Surinam: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Pinter, 1987), 41.

15. Thea Doelwijt and Henk Tjon, *Ba Uzi*, original script (1980), 6-9 courtesy of Henk Tjon.

16. Kagie, 199.

17. *Ibid.*, 196-202. Andre Haakmat writes of tortures and unauthorized arrests, but points out that the military viewed events in Liberia, where a similar sergeants' coup had just occurred, as far more extreme. Haakmat, *De revolutie uitgegleden* (Amsterdam: Jan Mets, 1987), 39-40.

18. *De Ware Tijd*, June 7 and 9, 1980.

19. During a visit to Suriname at this time, I tried to speak with the Commander, without luck. However, I watched him speaking to the troops following an athletic contest. All were assembled on the parade grounds of the Memre Boekoe base except for the NMR members, who as usual were huddled in a meeting. Finally, after Bouterse issued an order to appear, they came on the run. Then it began to rain. Rather than break up the assembly, he held the troops at attention in pouring rain for twenty minutes. If there was any doubt about the military's discipline or Bouterse's authority, it was erased from my mind after this demonstration.

20. The members included Prof. Mr. Coen Ooft, Mr. Eddy Hoost, Drs. Evert Azimullah, Mr. Hans Lim A Po, and Mr. F. Currie.

21. Verhey and Van Westerloo, 23.

22. Quoted in *NRC-Handelsblad*, Mar. 6, 1981.

23. For all his energetic work on behalf of the Chin A Sen government chronicled in his fascinating memoir, *De revolutie uitgegleden*, Haakmat was, at the outset, one of those opposed to the coup that brought the military to power (27).

24. *Ibid.*, 128-29.

25. Cited in Verhey and Van Westerloo, 26.

26. For a close analysis of popular reactions to the revolution, see Gary Brana-Shute, "Politicians in Uniform: Suriname's Bedeviled Revolution," *Caribbean Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 24-27, 49-50.

27. *De Ware Tijd*, Feb. 9, 1981.

28. Verhey and Van Westerloo, 53.

29. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Mar. 7, 1981.

30. Ibid.

31. Haakmat, 48.

32. Monkau, 27.

33. *De Ware Tijd*, Aug. 30, 1980.



# 4

## Confronting *de Jongens*

The Surinamese revolution is too friendly. Reactionary forces are too strong. You have to eliminate those who are not with you, otherwise they will eliminate you.

Maurice Bishop to Desi Bouterse, October 1982

The rehabilitation of those seeking a more revolutionary road for change in Suriname triggered a new round of conflict, this time more patient, systematic, and deadly. Six months in prison had only strengthened the beliefs of Sital, Mijnals, and their companions. They read extensively, sustained a dialogue with outsiders and among themselves, and enjoyed the martyred image that their supporters provided them. Their release, combined with Bouterse's apparent endorsement of their program, seemed to confirm the triumph of radical reform. Moreover, the radical current acquired new energy and direction from Harvey Naarendorp, Suriname's new Foreign Minister.

Now, like a traffic policeman, Bouterse found himself at the intersection of two determined, but very different, traffic flows—the one pressing for constitutional developments strengthening democracy, the other seeking socioeconomic revolution. That the latter dressed itself in the language of democracy may not have been illegitimate according to some uses of the term, but it confused the issue. For those seeking a better deal for the poor, procedures were not as important as outcomes. For many others, however, the guarantee of a *rechtsstaat* (the rule of law) came first—even at the risk that

professional politicians might again turn their backs on the needy.

It is interesting to imagine Bouterse, the sports instructor, gradually abandoning any commitment to rules (i.e., "umpiring" the contest between these two political forces). Since the reformers and the revolutionaries seemed fairly equal in strength, he could go with the flow of each, at least as long as it suited him. The result was a rhetoric from the top that headed in all directions. One suspects that Bouterse did not learn a great deal from either group about the fundamental visions and ideals that it represented. His learning was focused more heavily on the weaknesses of those around him, the means by which individuals and groups could successfully be manipulated, and the opportunities that might accrue to those who prevailed. In this period, the rule of law took its hardest beating, but so did the search for a more egalitarian society.

## THE REVOLUTION GAINS MOMENTUM

On May Day 1981, a year after his "four renewals" speech, Chin A Sen announced that a new Front for Liberation and Development would be formed, to be led by Army Commander Desi Bouterse. All political parties and functional groups could join, if they wished. Moreover, within a year, the President pledged that an election would be held to approve a new constitution. Thereafter, elections could be scheduled for a legislative body. In the meantime, the government would be managed at two levels:

1. The *Beleidscentrum* (Policy-Making Center), comprising the President, the Chairman of the Liberation and Development Front (Bouterse), the Garrison Commander (Roy Horb), the Chairman of the NMR (Iwan Graanoogst), the Chairman of the Advisory Council (Iwan Krolis, leader of the small but influential PALU), and the Foreign Minister (Harvey Naarendorp);
2. The Council of Ministers, directed by President Chin A Sen. The *Beleidscentrum* would lay down general policy directions and resolve major disputes, while the Cabinet would be a coordinating and executing body.

Bouterse continued the practice begun by Mijns and Sital of mobilizing people at the grass roots in *volkscomites* (VCs). On August 7, 1981, he installed the 100th such body. At this event, as at virtually every other installation, leaders of the NMR were present to encourage the members to take initiatives for neighborhood betterment and to be ready to defend the revolution. Chin A Sen must have seen the political significance of such popular mobilization, for he showed up in military uniform at a conference of VC leaders in July. He saw "a new dimension to self-government" in this activity and urged local activists to go "house-to-house in the neighborhoods to talk with the people about their problems and to look for their solutions."

Other speakers at this meeting had a more ideological agenda. According to PALU leader Iwan Krolis, this was a revolution that had to be defended against new threats of colonial and imperial exploitation. Both he and Rob Leter, a Bouterse confidant, emphasized the need to follow the example of Grenada. As Leter put it, Suriname was ahead of Grenada in many ways, but Grenadians knew what they were fighting for, while Surinamers were not so clear.

Bouterse claimed to be discouraged by the decline in enthusiasm for the revolution. He attributed this to the failure of leaders to set a clear political course. But now that socialism had been embraced as the only way to break out of the paralysis of ethnic fragmentation, Surinamers should take heart anew in their country's destiny. Socialism would no longer permit groups and individuals to be played off against one another.

In preparation for his 1981 May Day appearance, Chin A Sen had been given a speech to read that included many passages praising socialism. He removed them all. Nevertheless, a *Manifest van de Revolutie* (Revolutionary Manifesto) was widely circulated in printed form. Written by Iwan Krolis, it described the "revolution" as a reaction against plantation neocolonialism—that is, Suriname continued to be an externally exploited society even after its proclamation of independence. Popular participation under the 1975 constitution had been nonexistent. The major decisions were made by foreign businessmen and their local agents, while the interests of organized and unorganized mass groups were always shoved aside.

We will create a new administrative order [the Manifesto read] in which true democracy will reign and real influence on political decision-making and action throughout all levels of the community will be guaranteed to all portions of the community. This means that we will thoroughly raze the false parliamentary democracy of neo-colonialism, in order to build a new and real democracy in which true influence by our people's specialised mass organizations will be guaranteed, and for which the decentralization of the administration will serve as a true indicator.

.....

Revolution never proceeds on the basis of the lowest common denominator of interests and opinions unearthed from among the rubble of neo-colonial society, but proceeds from and is led by well-chosen societal interests which are recognized as fundamental and essential facets of the larger national interest. In Suriname, these are the interests of those larger portions of our people who have been placed in positions of disadvantage by colonialism and neo-colonialism. These are the interests of the people as a whole, with the exception of the *compradores* [*sic*], those opportunists who have assembled their empty existence from the crumbs which have fallen from the table of our exploiters and who wish to maintain that existence at any cost.

These *compradores* are now scattered throughout our community, agitating and spreading panic, betrayal and discord. They have pushed their way even onto the front ranks of the revolution, where, disguised as true revolutionaries, they are actively trying to frustrate and endanger the process of that revolution. Let us unmask them, these

pseudo-revolutionaries who hope to reverse the process. Let us meet them head on, these pseudo-revolutionaries who now express their concern with community problems which they themselves have created, and who have not yet been able to undo the revolution.<sup>1</sup>

The manifesto ended with a call for a "revolutionary, united front to lead the revolution, to protect it and to bring it to a successful conclusion."

In September, the first "district parliament" was held in Marowijne, on the French Guiana border. An Amerindian, Nardo Aluman, was installed by Bouterse as Speaker, and at the opening ceremonies Battalion Commander Henk Fernandes, paraphrasing one of Maurice Bishop's catch phrases regarding "Westminster democracy," boasted that "four-minute democracy, exercised at the voting booth, has been buried once and for all here in Albina." NMR member R. Olfers added "What the Revolution wants is to bring you together so that when we are no longer around, no one will drive you apart." Bouterse was also on hand to cite the revolution's accomplishments. Among them, he said, were the creation of 1,900 new units of people's housing (compared with only 250 under Arron), 1,000 jobs created (including 700 in the building trades), revitalization of agricultural lands, and a city cleanup carried out by schoolchildren.<sup>2</sup> He might also have added the government's landmark decree on women's legal rights, an issue that had been debated for ten years or more, meeting resistance among men of all ethnic groups. Many VCs had made their own contribution, organizing local road-paving, drainage, and other public works.

One battlefield of reform was the University of Suriname. Only recently established on the eve of independence, the university consisted of faculties of law, medicine, and social science. (Hard sciences were handled in technical institutes.) The first fight broke out in the social sciences, when students tried to get a radical sociologist, Arthur ten Berghe, appointed to full-time status. Because he lacked a doctorate (and perhaps also because he was an enthusiastic RVP member), Chin A Sen's Cabinet overrode the Minister of Education's decision to grant him the position. As a result, student protests disrupted the university's work until the decision was reversed. Faculty (and would-be faculty) organized a group called the *Vereniging van Onafhankelijke Intellectuelen van Suriname* (Union of Independent Intellectuals of Suriname) to support overhaul of the educational system along more socialist lines.

Probably the most stridently radical voice in politics at this time was that of Fred Derby, leader of the C-47 union federation and driving force in the breakaway faction of the PNR. He was a close adviser to the NMR and a fearless critic of the Chin A Sen government, which he called "a rightist businessman's government in which a few leftist elements are sitting." As leader of the bauxite workers, Derby was familiar with the mining industry and convinced of hidden profit-taking in its operations. There should be a

thorough review of the Brokopondo Agreement between Suriname and Alcoa, he said, following the example of the rewritten agreements between OPEC and the Seven [oil company] Sisters. In a union struggle with Suralco, the Alcoa affiliate, he described labor unions as "revolutionary organs," since "every cell in our body commits itself to the struggle against the enrichment of other nations at our expense."

There was a limit to this kind of radical talk, however. The two big bauxite/aluminum companies, Shell/Billiton and Alcoa/Suralco were the sources of 80 percent of Suriname's foreign exchange, and the technology, financing, and marketing linkages involved were far beyond Suriname's reach. Derby's "OPEC model" referred to mutually convenient takeovers accompanied by lucrative service contracts to the affected companies. But even this sort of formality might be risky in a world of abundant bauxite. It would certainly involve a financial cost that Suriname could not afford.<sup>3</sup>

Nationalization *was* the answer, however, for other, especially Dutch, multinationals. Cyrill Daal, leader of Suriname's largest union federation, the *Moederbond*, momentarily upstaged Derby with his call for nationalization of the Surinamese Electric Company (in a joint venture with the Dutch giant OGEM) and any other enterprises that, as he put it, were making no investments and/or were cheating Suriname. The government should reexamine all state contracts with foreign companies, including those in joint ventures.<sup>4</sup> Presumably more confiscatory (i.e., cheaper) financial means could be applied in these cases—with less risk to Suriname's access to foreign exchange.

But far from terminating the joint venture policy by outright takeovers, Chin A Sen proposed *more* joint ventures—this time with existing companies in Suriname—to control their activities and move them into new, priority directions. Moreover, he championed "Surinamization," government action to promote national production. In fact, the greatest progress to be noted in Suriname's economic development in this period can be found in the field of import substitution and export promotion. Chin A Sen advocated import controls to protect a long list of infant agro-industries (e.g., baby food, jams, jellies, marmalade, syrups, flowers, poultry, eggs, pork, fish, shellfish, and rice).

In this economic climate, incentives (still enhanced with abundant Dutch aid) were offset by investor caution, underlined by the corruption trials that dragged on through 1981. The cautionary value of these trials was aggravated by the delay with which the special court moved. If the pressure to bring verdicts of guilty was reduced so as to permit a more judicious treatment of evidence, there was nothing to be done about the backlog of cases. Some people, like Frank Essed and Henck Arron, after long periods of detention, were ultimately released without having been brought to trial. Still others, although found guilty and sentenced to prison terms, were immediately

released because their pretrial detention more than matched their formal sentence.

On the whole, the Chin A Sen period showed more positive than negative accomplishments and won increasing recognition in a world that, eighteen months earlier, would have asked, "Where's Suriname?" Like any progressive Third World state, Suriname sought recognition from what it considered its "fellows"—a far-flung assortment of regimes that doubtless had to consult an atlas and encyclopedia to take the measure of their new friend. Among the more radical of these were North Korea, Libya, Ghana, Grenada, Nicaragua, and Cuba. Bouterse appears to have learned certain tactical lessons from the Cuban experience, ones that were frequently cited by both the Sandinistas and New Jewel Movement leaders. He argued, for example, that Fidel Castro entered the mountains as an anticommunist but was driven into the arms of the Soviet Union by a U.S. trade embargo. Suriname could avoid that, he said, only by a strict policy of neutrality. The depth of his neutrality, like his commitment to democracy, was not so great, however. In a state visit to Grenada a few months later, Bouterse called for an end to U.S. military maneuvers in the Caribbean and supported the Cuban-led move to have the Caribbean declared a zone of peace. And when provided the chance to participate in the Caribbean Basin Initiative of President Ronald Reagan, he said that Suriname was not interested.

## **PUBLIC BACKLASH**

These were heady directions for the Surinamese public. They had been aroused and rebellious before, but few had ever contemplated actual revolution. Yet that is what it looked like they now had. Public feelings about it, as Bouterse admitted, were not clear. One reason for this was the peculiarly strong attachment that Surinamers have to the procedural guarantees of democracy. If, as J. S. Furnivall writes, a plural society like Suriname's is more like "a crowd and not a community," it has also had the capacity to reflect upon this fact and overcome it. If colonial exploitation was by ruthless and "socially incomplete" masters, as Furnivall also claims,<sup>5</sup> this did not prevent the exploited, in the words of Rupert Emerson, from using the colonial power's own declared principles as weapons against them.<sup>6</sup> Where such principles could serve the cause of liberation, they might also become the foundation for community. Those principles were now very much in dispute.

At the 1981 May Day rally, military police seized a number of student posters reading "Away with the State of Emergency," "New Order=New Elite?" and "Restore Democratic Rights." Attendance, surprisingly, was only about 1,000, partly because of a strike by private bus owners. Gary Brana-Shute writes that public appearances by Bouterse and Chin A Sen

received progressively cooler receptions, climaxing with general booing of the former at a soccer match, followed by only perfunctory applause for the President.<sup>7</sup>

Although it is unclear who, exactly, the Revolutionary Manifesto had meant by "the pseudo-revolutionaries" who were "agitating and spreading panic, betrayal and discord," one apparent target of this charge was Humphrey Keerveld, leader of the DVF. From a position well to the left of the regime, Keerveld had persistently criticized the military's behavior. Finally, he left Suriname to set up a newspaper in Georgetown, Guyana. Not long afterward, he was killed there. This act was widely assumed to be the work, somehow, of Bouterse's agents. Another leftist anti-Bouterse *ruziemaker* was Bram Behr, a Marxist journalist who described himself as an Albanian-line Communist. His weekly newspaper, *Mokro*, was a lively forum of criticism and discussion of political issues. On June 24, 1981, he set up the Surinamese Communist Party as an alternative to the broad front that Bouterse and his advisers were planning. Eighteen months later, he was murdered.

The military was clearly angered by such criticism and imposed a censorship law to bring Suriname's freewheeling press to heel. Occasionally thereafter, they ordered brief closures of the dailies *De West*, *De Ware Tijd*, and *Vrije Stem* for violation of their guidelines. Probably the safest site for critical analysis and reporting was The Netherlands, where the independent *Weekkrant Suriname* (Suriname Weekly) was set up at this time. With a large enough exile community to sustain it, and leaving conventional journalism to the Dutch dailies, it went after the stories behind the news and provided a range of critical commentary. Military police at Suriname's Zanderij Airport were soon on the lookout to confiscate incoming copies.

## THE CONSTITUTION QUESTION

If Chin A Sen was counting on the production of a new constitution to bring order and confidence back into Suriname's affairs, he was mistaken. The new draft constitution, ordered in the summer of 1980, had only added another hot issue to the agenda—this one almost inevitably creating an "us vs. them" polarity. Who should rule? Indirect military power, as later developed under the 1987 constitution, was of little interest at this point to Bouterse and his supporters. The loss of *any* power was to be fought, at least until the revolution's objectives were achieved. But were there *any* limits or objectives in Bouterse's thinking?

Jules Wijdenbosch, a teacher at the new National Military Academy, set the tone for this debate in June 1981, when he warned an audience that there should be "no haste with the constitution." Surinamers should be given a chance to get used to the new situation. Much experimentation was necessary

with the new structures of participation. Moreover, people should deepen their identification with "functional" (occupational) interest groups, for these would be the channels for participation in the future. As regards economic changes, Wijdenbosch urged caution. Political changes, he said, must precede economic ones. Of course, this was what Chin A Sen was arguing, too—but in defense of the new constitution.

The Constitutional Commission presented a draft proposal at the end of August 1981. A photo in *De Ware Tijd* shows the ceremony, with Bouterse and Horb looking on unemotionally. Commission Chairman Hans Lim A Po, a Harvard-trained lawyer, told those in attendance that the document came to grips with Surinamese realities and would fulfill "the present aspirations of the Surinamese people." It was a critical moment for Chin A Sen. "It is difficult and dangerous," he said,

to establish a new order. Such a process demands the utmost exertion, discipline, integrity, insight, loyalty and humility. We have to learn from our errors and from the errors of others. The history of revolutions teaches us that few revolutions have succeeded in realizing their goals. Revolutions have high points and low points. Revolutions often lead their own lives and can take a direction which no one had desired. We must not make a revolution for the sake of revolution, but continue to concentrate our attention on the "four renewals" of our society.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, he believed that only by anchoring the work of change in predictable processes that guaranteed full and responsible participation would it have a lasting impact.

What was the structure of this newly proposed government? Its model, Lim A Po said, was the French system, with a directly elected President, and a Prime Minister and Cabinet chosen by the President and accountable to Parliament. The latter body was to consist of two chambers: one "political" (i.e., its members chosen in general elections, presumably among contending political parties) and the other "social" (i.e., its representatives chosen by the membership of various constitutionally identified social, or "functional," groups). Parties would be much more strictly controlled and would be forced to be democratic, financially accountable, and (somehow) above ethnicity. The military, represented by the NMR (its political agent) would not be represented in either chamber but would be on a third body, the Revolutionary Council, an advisory body to the President.

The procedure for constitutional approval was scheduled to take close to a year, with a referendum, then national elections—the process concluding sometime in the fall of 1982. In response to press criticism that the members of the commission were representatives of the old order, Chin A Sen responded irritably, "I know plenty of fine people from the old order, and I know a number of worthless ones in the new order."<sup>9</sup> Would the new constitution be judged on its merits or on its authorship? Not many copies

were circulated, and the process of evaluation never got in full swing before it was aborted.

Bouterse, previously giving lip service to Chin A Sen on the constitution and election issues, came back from his first political trip abroad—to Grenada—with new confidence and (New Jewel) rhetoric. "There will be no elections in the short term," he announced at the end of July. "This will have to wait until the people's committees express a wish for them." The job of building such committees must continue, and they would have more important things to do than getting bogged down in constitution-making.

More ambiguities in the military's behavior showed up in September and October. Former commando Wilfred Hawker was put on trial, charged with planning a coup the previous spring. Several of his fellow commandos were clearly pained by the event, giving strong character testimonials on his behalf. The evidence proving his preparations for a coup was, in fact, somewhat dubious.

Bram Behr touched more raw nerves with his coverage of a killing that took place in October 1981. A young Hindustani farmer was called out of his house in the evening and murdered by a group of military men allegedly looking for marijuana. Military police later found no trace of marijuana on the property and assumed that it was a case of mistaken identity. Five soldiers and one civilian were arrested.<sup>10</sup>

In October, Chas Mijnaals was assigned to the Office of the Cabinet of the President. This was part of an effort by Bouterse to have trusted military men overseeing the operations of all government offices. Mijnaals explained it in terms of "coordinating the execution of policies on behalf of the people's aspirations." The goal of these military overseers was to look for bottlenecks and other problems in bringing about change. Chin A Sen managed to express his satisfaction with this new addition to his office, but one must assume that it had a hidden agenda: to keep an eye on the President.

The Revolutionary Front spoken about in the spring was now ready to be unveiled. Absent from the membership were Chin A Sen and any of his Cabinet. Its top leadership (or Presidium) consisted of Bouterse, Horb, Graanoogst, and Mijnaals from the army; Michael Naarendorp of the RVP; Fred Derby of the C-47 union federation; and Jiwan Sital, leader of the Federation of Poor Farmers (FAL). Bundled together within its framework were the military's Department of Popular Mobilization, the Youth Council, and the Union of Independent Intellectuals; the Moederbond, CLO, FAL, Progressive Workers Organization, and C-47; and the PNR, PALU, and RVP. As the December 1981 inauguration date approached, Fred Derby warned that whisper campaigns and other resistance were mobilizing in recognition that the Front meant business. Representatives of various radical governments and groups arrived in Suriname for the event, including delegates from Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua, as well as representatives of the Working People's Alliance and

People's Progressive Party (Guyana), the Democratic Revolutionary Front (El Salvador), People's Progressive Movement (Trinidad), Jamaican Workers Party, and Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement. The event itself, drawing between 1,000 and 4,000 persons, was "too emotionally charged for our freedom-loving people to appreciate," wrote Cyriel Karg in Suriname's newsweekly *Sonde Spikri*.

Apparently anticipating and objecting to all the fanfare, Chin A Sen departed Paramaribo for the Creole coastal town of Coronie, where he delivered an impassioned speech on democracy. He warned against those who in the name of freedom subjected others to their will; against those who after agitating against luxury, exploitation, and laziness, were themselves their standard-bearers; against those who confused justice with the rights of the strongest; and against those who placed personal or group interests above the general interest. On economic issues, the President defended the role of multinational firms as potential partners in development. New standards of regulation and control were available, he insisted, and were preferable to rash, ill-considered actions.

We must recognize that part of the problem is in ourselves. Our consumption patterns are disastrous: we live for immediate consumption and consumption on credit, while we should rather be saving and investing for the future. The pie is only so big. Those trying to get larger pieces of it for themselves are robbing others. We must all sacrifice to make the pie larger.<sup>11</sup>

These were legitimate warnings for Suriname, and they were not inconsistent with the spirit that the new Revolutionary Front was purportedly trying to cultivate. But why didn't Chin A Sen make this speech at the Front's inauguration? Why did he give it the *same day* as the inauguration? What kind of gesture was this for the society? And most important, what had he seen that led him to it?

## THE SHOWDOWN

In an interview with *Vrije Stem*, January 16, 1982, Chin A Sen unburdened himself even further than he had in Coronie. He emphasized the need for a constitution and rules of the game as bases for clarity and stability in politics.

Personally, I am a supporter of parliamentary democracy. If I speak of socialism, I'm talking exclusively of democratic socialism, in which the central fact is that the people periodically choose their leaders. We reject both pure capitalism as well as Marxism-Leninism. They are both long dead.

The real question, he felt, was control over the state. "The state controls everything and everyone. But who controls the state?" As for the dynamics of the revolution, he claimed that anxiety was widespread and public opinion harder and harder to read:

The population is too halfhearted. The people are still insecure and are holding back....Everyone is a bit of an actor. You can go anywhere and find people who are "enthusiasts." But if you look again, you'll see it differently. You can easily organize schools and mobilize people to sit along the road and wave their little flags.

In mid-January 1982, a few days before Chin A Sen's birthday, newspapers ran announcements of an open house celebration that day in the Presidential Palace.<sup>12</sup> It was a sort of "last hurrah" for the cornered head of state. The papers covered the event, and a large turnout was evidence of the sympathy and support Chin A Sen still enjoyed.

But Bouterse took the occasion to warn him publicly that "many people" were concerned "with the fact that certain people have gathered around you. You must realize that these so-called friends are not going to defend you against your real, objective enemies." A Revolutionary Front communique a few days later was almost as cryptic: "certain progressives" were damaging the revolution by their criticism. This only played into the hands of the "imperialists" and their plans for destabilization. "Countless forces," it said, "are at work to destroy the Front and frustrate the revolution." In an act of clear defiance to Chin A Sen, Bouterse announced on January 26 that there would be no elections for the time being. Regarding the draft constitution, he was especially critical: "What sense is there to copy 273 articles from Holland, America, and France?" he asked. "That leaves me cold." Elections, he said, would come only when the problems of poverty, education, health care, and production had been solved.

A flavor of the ideological perspective expressed by the Front is provided by Front leader Fred Derby's revealing anti-Western account of Suriname's history. Christianity, he said, served the plantation owners by displacing the frustrations of their work force, and it also pumped blacks full of inferiority feelings regarding whites. Education, he argued, controlled by the church for years, taught Surinamers to be dependent on Europe. "Education robbed us of our cultural values and brought us no knowledge, skills, or confidence that we in the Third World could solve our own problems." Instead, Surinamers were indoctrinated with individualism and consumerism, disruptive inclinations that found expression not only "in our thinking, but also in other things like our eating habits and ideals."<sup>13</sup> This criticism could have come just as easily from Frantz Fanon or Antonio Gramsci. But, if Suriname was under the spell of an ideological hegemony, it was more likely the secular Dutch (and American) influences that could be blamed, not those of the churches, whose

works were generally enlightened and advanced the cause of social justice. Still, there was no denying the dislocating impact of the colonial experience—even if there was little consensus as to what could be done about it.

Despite the warm show of public support that Chin A Sen had garnered on his birthday, the military "requested" on February 4 that he "give back his mandate" to them. Chin A Sen apparently had no alternative then but to resign. Bouterse explained that "Chin A Sen's Cabinet had divided" over the issue of the elections that had been promised by October 1982—a subject that was to be addressed in a speech by the President on February 25. "We [i.e., the Military Authority] came to the conclusion that the difference of visions in the government was so great that it could no longer govern in its present composition."<sup>14</sup> The military approached the acting Chief Justice of the Surinamese Supreme Court, Fred Ramdat Misier, and invited him to serve as acting President, with the understanding that the roles of President and Prime Minister, (i.e., head of state and head of government), would once again be separate.

The public had a chance to show their reaction to these changes a few days later when the funeral of Jacques Lemmer ("Pa Lem") was held. The colorful "chief propagandist" of the NPS for many years, had died shortly before Chin A Sen's ouster. Because of delay to permit relatives to arrive from The Netherlands, the burial took place a week after the coup. A throng of mourners gathered on the grounds of Suriname's largest labor federation, the *Moederbond*, where for the first time in two years they heard speeches by Arron, Van Genderen, and *Moederbond* Chairman Cyrill Daal, among others. A number of VHP leaders also showed up, as well as the Chin A Sen. The procession to the cemetery was witnessed by several thousand onlookers, according to *Vrije Stem*. Bouterse's reaction? A mixture of envy and cynicism: "All week they've been summoning people, as I understand it. Naturally, there were a lot who were just curious. But it was [like] a pretty big 'people's committee.' Or maybe even a 'district council.'

Bouterse claimed that he would have attended the event, since he knew "Pa Lem" well. But he "was aware of plans to misuse the event." Asked about reports that the Dutch were planning to freeze their development aid because of the ouster of Chin A Sen, Bouterse's language was stronger: "This irritates me no end. I hope that Surinamers will draw strength from this, so that after 1990 our hand will never have to be open again for the Dutch."<sup>15</sup>

At the installation of the 157th people's committee, at Landing 11A along the Saramacca Canal, NMR leader R. Olfers expressed his frustration with public reluctance to support the revolution: "In every community where the NMR has installed people's committees, there are political figures who want to have nothing to do with the NMR, because we are seriously at work and not interested in taking advantage of the people."

NMR member J. Cederboom spoke of "the installation of a people's committee as an act of the people" and said that "the NMR, the army leadership, and the government recognize this committee as the representative of the residents in the area." NMR Deputy Chairman John Hardjoprajitno added that, "The installation of your *volkscomite* is a sign that you are ready to destroy the old structure of the country and to establish a new order....From this moment you have taken the development of your community in your own hands."<sup>16</sup>

*De Ware Tijd's* account of this and similar ceremonies gave no sign that the local group or its leaders (whoever they were) had anything of their own to say. It appeared to be a "parachuted institution," with little grounding at the local level. The Committee of Christian Churches (CCK), apparently urged by Bouterse to join the Revolutionary Front, was unhappy with the narrowing of acceptable channels for political articulation in the society. The leaders were still too vague about the course they planned to follow, said a CCK communique, and were giving the people no chance to speak out apart from the *volkscomites*. With so little chance for input or accountability, it continued, the chances for *regelen* (i.e., corrupt dealings) is enormous.

Stung by this criticism, Bouterse told newsmen that such people (as the CCK) "have had the Westminster model poured into them with their porridge spoon." Suriname needed its own model, he argued, one that permitted the interests of functional groups to come forward as well as those of the districts and neighborhoods (via the *volkscomites*). For the new National Assembly, he suggested, there should be *getrapte* (indirect) elections by these smaller constituencies. The military would not be represented per se, but individual military men should be able to join *volkscomites* and serve, if elected, as their representatives. Although this was a structure attempted in the 1976 Cuban constitution, Bouterse insisted that he was not following a Cuban line. "We're not going to import any ideologies," he said. A proposal from the RVP and PALU for direct military rule, with Bouterse chairing a Revolutionary Council made up jointly of military and (RVP and PALU) civilians, was brushed aside by Bouterse, who continued to look for other candidates for the new all-civilian Cabinet.

## "THE BOYS" WHO CRIED "COUP"

After so much talk regarding "counterrevolutionary" groups, Bouterse and the military were almost toppled by a coup attempt on March 11-12, 1982. The leader was a former lieutenant Surindre Rambocus, one of the conspirators in 1980. Behind the conspiracy were politicians from the previous regime, Baal Oemrawsing, Salim Somohardjo, Sahidi Rasam, and N. Mahadewsing being the most prominent. According to later accounts, Oemrawsing and

Rambocus had originally planned to capture the military's top leadership at a religious ceremony in a Hindu temple, at a related celebration in the Presidential Palace, or at a party at Oemrawsing's house later. When each of these plans fell through, Rambocus resolved to follow the same pattern Bouterse had used two years earlier—seize the Memre Boekoe barracks. Once that had been secured, the conspirators would take control of the country's telecommunications and other key installations, finally capturing Bouterse's downtown headquarters at Fort Zeelandia.

The coup got off to a good start on March 4 with the capture of Memre Boekoe without a fight. The Santo Boma prison was taken, and a number of prisoners there were released, among them former commando Wilfred Hawker. Installation after installation fell without a shot. When Rambocus announced that the military leadership had been overthrown and "liquidated," and that a National Liberation Council had been formed, there was general jubilation. Only two of the 500 troops at Memre Boekoe chose to leave rather than continue under Rambocus's leadership.

But the formidable old Fort Zeelandia remained in Bouterse's hands. After he managed to smuggle out a tape refuting the claim of his "liquidation," troops loyal to him began to show up. For fourteen hours, Suriname witnessed this uncertain standoff—one that was filled with a stream of radio declarations exchanged between the two sides. Rambocus' fatal mistake was his release of military policeman Hans Lachman, sentenced the week before to ten years in prison for the murder of a farmer (in the marijuana case mentioned earlier). Lachman volunteered to drive an armored vehicle to Fort Zeelandia to negotiate the surrender of Bouterse and company. But Lachman must have figured that there was more to be gained by keeping Bouterse in power. He turned his vehicle over to the troops defending Fort Zeelandia, permitting the tide to turn in the struggle.<sup>17</sup>

Now it was Rambocus's turn to be under siege. Fighting at Memre Boekoe resulted in Hawker being seriously wounded and taken prisoner. He was televised calling on the rebels to surrender. Then, off camera, he was summarily executed "by a firing squad," according to *De Ware Tijd*.<sup>18</sup>

Because they allegedly had supported the coup, reporters for the Hindustani radio station Radika were barred from a military news conference. Indeed, the Hindustani community was especially shaken by these events. As much as they (and many others) would have preferred the overthrow of Bouterse and his government, very few were involved in the coup. Nevertheless, many Hindustanis and Javanese were arrested for questioning. Perhaps it was fortunate that a Hindustani had taken over the position of President, and that it was a Hindustani who had betrayed Rambocus. Nevertheless, as ethnicity became less binding for some, it was still feared as a weapon that could be indiscriminately hurtful.

After days on the run, Oemrawsing was found dead in Nickerie.

Somohardjo, Rasam, and Mahadewsing were captured; and after eluding pursuers for several days, Rambocus was captured in the Saramacca countryside. Suspicion over the circumstances of Oemrawsing's death<sup>19</sup> and outrage over the execution of Hawker, combined with Dutch threats to cancel all foreign aid, may have saved Rambocus's life—at least for the moment. Bouterse announced that a *krijgsraad* (court-martial) would be provided for him and all other suspects.<sup>20</sup>

An uneasy calm settled over Suriname in the following months. Bouterse announced a new, mostly civilian government in mid-March. Headed by a former Minister of Finance, Henry Neijhorst, the Cabinet featured a number of moderates, including several holdovers from the Chin A Sen government. Two PALU ministers were dropped, and although several RVP members were appointed in their stead, the Dutch press and London's *Latin American Regional Report—Caribbean* judged the Neijhorst Cabinet to represent a turn to the right—one that would restore international confidence in the regime. Instead, there were new confrontations.

## APPRAISING THE ENDS AND MEANS

Journalists reporting on and criticizing the government from a leftist point of view still aroused the military's ire. Bram Behr was arrested and his printing equipment seized in April, and the Union of Progressive Media Workers, led by *De Ware Tijd* reporter Leslie Rahman, was consumed with meetings debating their respective duties to the truth and to social reform.

Bouterse and Horb could also be said to struggle with this problem, if you accepted their claims to be seeking real reforms. Horb spoke of the problem of the curfew: sixteen days after it had been lifted, Rambocus attempted his coup. Was freedom or order the top priority for carrying out the reforms? Bouterse urged "every right-minded Surinamer to enter into dialogue with us if there are any misunderstandings, and not to take a hostile position a priori." Derby's own "spin" on the problem of reconciling Surinamers to the revolution was once again to attack the "narrow individualism that is so deeply rooted in the workers as a consequence of the Western-dominated education system."

The education system remained a battlefield, as students and radical faculty tried to reorganize curriculum throughout the school system and, at the University of Suriname, to force allegedly less qualified instructors onto the staff. Most issues were framed in terms of academic freedom and institutional autonomy vs. the regime's emphasis on social involvement and support of the revolution. Emblematic of this struggle was the student disruption of a lecture on the Caribbean Basin Initiative by a visiting U.S. Congress staff member.<sup>21</sup> The Dean of the Faculty of Social Economy, Gerard Leckie, claimed that

radical students and faculty were being encouraged by the Minister of Education, Harold Rusland.

It was harder to get an ideological reading of the military on the economic front. As the international press had anticipated, the Neijhorst government made no new departures, and despite their early effort to clean up the civil service, the military had finally backed down. "*Zeven...even*" was back in business, as well as more costly forms of corruption (even as the Special Court was continuing its investigations of the Arron government). And while Chin A Sen had transferred monies from the West Suriname Project to spend on more immediate social needs, Neijhorst announced that work on the West Suriname railroad ("from nothing to nowhere") would resume, despite continued public skepticism, Amerindian resistance, and collapsing bauxite prices. This willingness to deal once again with the local and foreign contractors laying the project's infrastructure constituted a dramatic turnabout.

The military, of course, had also managed to put quite a dent into the budget for their own benefit.<sup>22</sup> Now the loss of manpower through emigration, suspension of new international and private investment because of political uncertainties, and a temporary freezing of development aid from The Netherlands created what Prime Minister Neijhorst called a danger of "the Guyana effect"—socioeconomic collapse such as neighboring Guyana had experienced under President Forbes Burnham in the 1970s. Neijhorst warned his countrymen to control consumption and be prepared to make sacrifices.<sup>23</sup>

Bouterse lifted the curfew for the second time on July 1, 1982, Abolition Day. But at the same time, the military began to set up and train an armed "people's militia," drawn basically from the ranks of the RVP. Cyrill Daal, leader of the *Moederbond*, denounced this bitterly. "Can't the army or police...or the people be trusted anymore?" he asked. As if to prove the point, reports filtered out of fighting among the top officers in the army. *Sonde Spikri* editor Cyriel Karg expressed the jaded view that "Whether in uniform or not, our leaders are more the object of ridicule than of fear. But we *do* fear the future."

In August, when the "military auditor" of the *krijgsraad* released two Hindustani officers suspected of plotting with Hawker in the aborted 1981 coup, Bouterse promptly ordered their rearrest, bringing down a new hail of criticism, especially from the Bar Association, for this assault on the justice system.<sup>24</sup> The Medical Association and the *Moederbond* both expressed their support for the Bar Association's statement. The radical weekly *Pipel* felt it was somewhat hypocritical that all these judges and lawyers could get upset about the rule of law now if they had not been upset on February 25, 1980. Meanwhile, Bouterse responded to the criticism by "releasing" the two soldiers, whereupon he confined them to barracks.

In another confrontation later in the month, a group of Hindustani rice farmers in Nieuw Nickerie blockaded the town's airstrip with their tractors to

protest the government's low price supports. Shaken by the strategic aspects of the incident, local troops broke up the demonstration with what Suriname newspapers called "unnecessary brutality," arresting ten of the protestors, including Jiwan Sital, the leader of FAL and a member of the *Beleidscentrum*.

While years of oil exploration finally paid off in September with a promising strike in petroleum-bearing sand in the Saramacca area, reports of new economic scandals surfaced—this time involving the military and its friends. Three million guilders were reported unaccounted for at the PALU-run Jai Creek/Phedra (hydroelectric) Project office, and Denise de Hart was removed from the Central Purchasing Bureau (CIS) for discrepancies in her agency's budget and income.<sup>25</sup> Her own countercharges regarding the corruption of others were impossible to validate but, as a later report of Suriname's *Rekenkamer* (Government Accounting Office) noted, governmental procedures were thoroughly ignored under the military in preference for informal *ad hoc* dealings. Strictly following the regulations "was generally considered as an effort at 'destabilization' and was punished....Privilege—and legal insecurity—reigned supreme throughout the bureaucratic apparatus."<sup>26</sup> *Pipel* correctly noted the conflict of interest developing in the military's rhetoric and its position: "Military officers are getting diplomatic posts and high functions in the ministries and state enterprises—functions that pay very well. But the military are also susceptible to the glitter of public life and the temptations of power."

## GETTING THE MILITARY BACK INTO THE BARRACKS

In September, amid a new wave of strikes, several high NPS officials met with Bouterse and Horb. Haakmat, who also attended the meeting, reports that at one point Horb told Bouterse, "Andre's right. This thing [governing] is too difficult for us. We're in over our heads."<sup>27</sup> Bouterse then decided to hold discussions with them on redemocratization over a long weekend at the Katwijk/Wederzorg plantation in Commewijne, three hours by boat from Paramaribo. Haakmat describes these deliberations at some length in his book, *De revolutie uitgedelen*.<sup>28</sup> At their conclusion, there was an agreement on rough guidelines for a new constitution (roughly following the Lim A Po model) and a timetable to achieve it. A new government would be installed immediately—one pledged to supervise the restoration of democracy. By February or March 1983, with a new constitution in the offing, a referendum would be held to accept or defeat it. New laws governing parties and elections would be passed, and elections for a new government would be held in August of that year. Haakmat notes ruefully that nothing more was ever heard of this "agreement."

In this atmosphere of disappointment and piecemeal challenge, the press

and radio threw off their self-censorship and joined the radical weeklies in criticizing the regime. Even more significantly, they provided wide circulation for protest declarations coming from the Council of Christian Churches, the Bar Association, the Association of Businessmen, union federations, academic leaders, and others. If the military did not respond to these protests, they certainly took careful note of them, according to the arrest list allegedly used in their later roundup and executions.

On October 13, Surindre Rambocus and six other defendants went on trial amid tight military security. Rambocus's "last words," widely circulated in The Netherlands, Curacao, and Suriname, constituted a stirring defense of the failed coup and its "holy cause of restoring freedom and democracy": "A society cannot come into being through struggle of everyone against everyone; authority is needed to eliminate the dangers of anarchy or to minimize it; in society, just as in nature, order must prevail, order which is anchored in laws applied universally."<sup>29</sup> Despite the efforts of intimidation by the military, crowds gathered outside the court to cheer and throw confetti on the defendants when they appeared. Rambocus was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment.

The final spiral of tension began in late October with the arrival of Grenada's revolutionary leader, Maurice Bishop, on a state visit. On the eve of this event Cyrill Daal, at a fiery press conference in the *Moederbond* headquarters, denounced both Bishop and Bouterse. All efforts to broadcast tapes or to report Daal's speech were blocked by the military, and he was arrested by the military police. Now the affair began to escalate. A wave of strikes by *Moederbond* workers crippled the docks, knocked out power, closed stores and factories, and shut down the control tower at the airport. According to one report, the Council of Ministers was forced to hold their reception for Bishop at the Presidential Palace by candlelight.

Thousands gathered in Revolutionary Square (in front of the Presidential Palace and adjacent to military headquarters) demanding Daal's release. Many held signs declaring "Down with Bouterse," "Military—The Enemy of Workers," and so on. The crowd was ordered to disperse, military reinforcements arrived, and heavy rains came down. Still the people remained. Finally, the military charged the crowd with bullwhips, driving them into side streets, where they were still able to block traffic. Bouterse then set Daal free, subject to later trial for his "insulting remarks."

"In the last few days," Bouterse told a crowd at Fort Bomika (his old strike headquarters), "we have discovered who the real enemies of the people are." His guest of honor, Maurice Bishop, observed that "the first law of revolution is survival; everything must be done to that end." Bouterse seemed prepared. "The government must carefully review its list of names," he said, "of those who have been unmasked as enemies."<sup>30</sup> The two leaders spoke to a crowd estimated at about 1,500. Nearby, Daal addressed an audience of

15,000, announcing a common front of all labor leaders (including Derby!) to demand the democratic structures promised at the outset of the revolution.

Counterattacking as best they could, Prime Minister Neijhorst and Foreign Minister Naarendorp accused members of the U.S. and Dutch embassies of being behind these events. (Two American diplomats were finally expelled in January 1983.) Andre Haakmat was attacked even more vehemently for his alleged role. Since his earlier ouster by Chin A Sen in 1981, Haakmat had served as an adviser to the *Moederbond* but was also on the military payroll as a legal adviser to Roy Horb, whose duties included keeping the unions in line. The behavior of Daal over the past few months cast a shadow over both Haakmat and Horb. The Neijhorst/Naarendorp criticisms also suggested a CIA role, an argument enhanced by the *Moederbond's* affiliation with the AFL-CIO through the American Institute for Free Labor Development.

Horb certainly contributed to these suspicions, returning from a vacation in the United States just in time to witness the Daal/Bishop incidents. In the United States, according to Cuban Ambassador Osvaldo Cárdenas, he had been accompanied by a Bouterse informant who returned with pictures of him meeting with Chin A Sen and several alleged CIA agents.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps because of these incriminating circumstances, Horb went to great pains to attack Haakmat. But regardless of whether Daal's activities were planned and coordinated by anyone other than Daal himself, they were certainly popular. Bouterse's goal of rallying his fellow Surinamers around the flag of national revolution was now clearly doomed.

## IS THIS STILL SURINAME?

Haakmat responded to these attacks by revealing the content of the Katwijk/Wederzorg discussions. Who has betrayed whom, he asked? The daily *Vrije Stem* commented by running a cartoon on November 17 showing Bouterse blindfolded and dressed in the gown of Justice. In one hand was an Uzi and in the other was a set of scales balancing "political ambition" against "military ambition." Shortly after the Katwijk/Wederzorg revelations, Haakmat's home was the target of automatic rifle fire in the middle of the night, reportedly by a squad of People's Militia members. Wasting no time, Haakmat escaped to French Guiana with the help of Daal and Bouterse's former press aide, Jozef Slagveer. Both of the latter returned to Paramaribo, according to Haakmat's later account, still confident that things would ultimately work out. "This is Suriname, isn't it?" Slagveer had insisted.

A few days later, Bouterse announced a new "plan for democracy." All labor unions and other "functional groups" would be allowed to make their input in shaping the plan. He excluded the associations of businessmen, lawyers, churchmen, and others "of that sort" as undemocratic and not

sufficiently national-minded. Their participation, he said, would lead only to "boundless debate and even chaotic babble."

If the other union federations had been hesitant to join the *Moederbond's* strike actions at the start of the month, their experience in these talks soon brought them closer together. In a collective declaration they rejected the military's plan as fraudulent and called upon the population "to prepare to struggle until real sociopolitical renewal can be won." The military, they concluded, "doesn't understand anything of what the Surinamese people feel." On November 25, a "*Bond voor Democratie*" (Alliance for Democracy) was established by all important religious groups (Hindu, Muslim, and Christian), together with the national associations of businessmen, manufacturers, lawyers, doctors, editors and publishers, farmers, and women. Ironically, Bouterse was not only restoring the consociational alliance of Creoles and Hindustanis, he was effecting an oppositional alliance of the very functional groups that constituted the alternative to ethnic politics!<sup>32</sup>

Things came to a head late in November, when students resumed their demonstrations against university reorganization and ideological indoctrination. Their march on December 2 was met with excessive police force—four students were beaten unconscious. On December 7, after a meeting in the headquarters of the Catholic Workers Organization, students marched to Revolutionary Square, where they encountered a combined military and police force. After some stone-throwing and an attempt to set an armored car on fire, the square was cleared.

The stage was now set for a very unexpected denouement. Within hours of the student disturbance, armored cars pulled up in front of the headquarters of the *Moederbond*, the ABC and Radika radio stations, and *Vrije Stem*, perhaps the most aggressive of Suriname's daily papers. Using bazookas and fire grenades, they destroyed each of the four buildings.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, using an "enemies list" of their most prominent opponents, Bouterse's men fanned out across the city, making predawn arrests. As Surinamese journalist Sig Wolf reconstructed the events from accounts of those able to escape the almost totally sealed-off country:

Some victims collapsed in terror. The wife of a businessman who managed to get the first flight out of Suriname told of the arrest of her neighbor: "I was awakened by a motor's roar....Military with weapons at the ready first shot my neighbor's four dogs, then they broke a louvered window and fired into the house. Doors were broken in and I saw my neighbor hit on the head by a rifle butt. He was pulled outside by his hair, and when he didn't move fast enough, he was kicked in the groin."<sup>34</sup>

A number of the most important detainees were taken to Fort Zeelandia, where they were interrogated and tortured. At one point, Suriname radio and television broadcast a "confession" by Andre Kamperveen and Jozef Slagveer, two of those arrested, to the effect that a coup had been planned for Christmas

Day, 1982. A tape of the "confession" was then played to the other prisoners during their interrogation. But, according to Roy Horb, the others refused to confirm the story.<sup>35</sup> Their plans stymied, Bouterse summoned his principal advisers, including Harvey Naarendorp, Iwan Krolis, Badrissein Sital, and Erroll Alibux. "What do we tell the Council of Ministers?" he asked. Later that day (December 8), the decision was made, apparently by this same group, to kill the prisoners and claim that they were attempting an escape.

The reader should be cautioned that little is known for certain about these decisions and the events that followed. Self-serving accounts and scapegoating cannot be discounted in the many unconfirmed stories that surround this most terrifying and fateful day in Suriname's modern history. On television, Bouterse claimed that the fifteen were killed while making an escape from Fort Zeelandia. He later claimed that he had been sleeping at the home of Lie Pauw Sam when the killing started. On many subsequent occasions, he argued that there would have been a much worse bloodbath if the conspiracy hadn't been nipped in the bud. Much later, on a trip to Brazil, he took full responsibility and admitted to participating in the killings.<sup>36</sup> Horb's claim of innocence ("I was summoned..") is complicated by the assertion that he was responsible for arrests of the radicals on the list (Bram Behr, Leslie Rahman, and Fred Derby) after he heard that his friend Daal had been picked up.<sup>37</sup> Yet another version of this story, told by Bouterse supporters, is that Horb, already under suspicion for his ties with Daal (and Haakmat), tried to save his own skin by hastening the killings.<sup>38</sup> And still another story is that a considerable amount of drugs and liquor had been consumed between the time of arrest and the executions, making everyone lose their capacity for judgment. The extensive violence done to the victims, both before and after their deaths, would tend to confirm this allegation.<sup>39</sup>

The most plausible stories are those that interpret the killings as deliberate actions in the pursuit of institutional self-preservation. These more cold-blooded theories include Bouterse's literally taking to heart advice from Bishop—amid the humiliating circumstances of the Grenadian's visit—"to do something about your opposition." Erroll Alibux is frequently mentioned as the strongest proponent of killing the prisoners, saying that a "severe shock....after a short period of unrest will produce the kind of peaceful conditions within which we'll be able to rule."<sup>40</sup>

According to the Horb account, which is the most detailed insider document that we have, Bouterse summoned all available members of the original sixteen revolutionary commandos to serve as a firing squad. One by one he brought the prisoners to the top floor of Fort Zeelandia, questioned and harangued them, and then sent them off to be killed. In this account, Bouterse was personally responsible for the deaths of Daal and Rambocus (his two principal nemeses). Fifteen bodies were delivered the next day to the morgue of the Academic Hospital. Among the executed "co-conspirators" were several

military officers involved in the Rambocus coup attempt; their lawyers, including John Baboeram, former Justice Minister Eddy Hoost, and Kenneth Goncalves, head of the Bar Association; Gerard Leckie, chairman of the University's Social Science Faculty; and journalists Bram Behr, Leslie Rahman, and Frank Wijngaarde.

One man escaped with his life: Fred Derby. Bouterse's story is that he arrived at Fort Zeelandia from the home of Lie Pauw Sam just in time to save Derby's life. Horb's story is that Derby was brought forward twice for questioning, and that Bouterse finally let him go with a warning, despite the qualms of other commandos that Derby would tell everything. In fact, Derby has kept his experiences on that terrible night to himself.

## REACTIONS

As mentioned earlier, Bouterse cynically announced "with regrets" that "a number of the suspects were killed in an escape attempt during their transfer from Fort Zeelandia to Memre Boekoe." The bodies on display in the morgue, however, revealed that almost all had been shot from the front—some a number of times. Several had also been tortured and/or mutilated after their deaths.

Prime Minister Neijhorst immediately tendered his resignation, as did acting President Ramdat Misier, the Surinamese ambassador to the United Nations, and other diplomatic personnel overseas. Stunned, but still courageously defiant, thousands of mourners showed up on December 13 at the four cemeteries where the victims were laid to rest, and for several days thereafter the National Women's Council led thousands of women in somber processions to Revolutionary Square, where they sang the national anthem and a variety of protest songs. Filing past the Dutch embassy, they reportedly chanted, "Help us, help us!"

Although the Dutch had already held up their development aid over the removal of Chin A Sen from the presidency, this had not been announced as formal policy. Now the immense aid program was suspended. For years to come, Suriname and The Netherlands would face off at a number of international conclaves in heated acrimony, the Surinamers claiming that The Hague had broken an international agreement, and the Dutch claiming that cold-blooded political murder changed the conditions of the aid agreement (*pacta sunt servanda, rebus sic stantibus*). Bouterse talked angrily of breaking relations with The Hague and with Washington, which announced cancellation of a much smaller \$1.5 million aid program on December 17. He then announced that worker participation would be imposed in all large enterprises as part of his plan to make Suriname "a people's democracy." Nevertheless, Foreign Minister Naarendorp insisted that Suriname was not moving into the

Communist camp. "Suriname is in no condition to copy any Cuban model," he told a United Nations press conference in February 1983. Cooperation with the rest of the Caribbean, as well as Venezuela and Brazil, was far more important than with Cuba, he added.

Hemispheric feelings were not exactly mutual, however. CARICOM members abruptly cooled toward Suriname's admission to that body, thought to be assured before the executions. And, despite Bouterse's repeated announcements that a great power in the area had offered to temporarily cover the lost Dutch aid monies, the mystery donor was never revealed. The Dutch paper *Het Parool* claimed that Bouterse was trying to make a deal with one of the drug-dealing "kingdoms" in Colombia to which he dispatched Henk Herrenberg (Suriname's freewheeling ambassador to The Netherlands) in mid-January 1983. As for the government of Brazil, the best that the peripatetic Naarendorp could achieve was a vague expression of neutrality and the hope that Suriname would not become another Cold War battleground. Finally, despite a secret military agreement that had been signed with Venezuela only five days before the executions, that government maintained such a chilly silence that Naarendorp was forced to cancel a planned visit to Caracas in early February.

## THE LAST SCENE IN ACT ONE

In one of his better speeches, on Christmas Eve, Bouterse told the Surinamese people that almost all the aid withheld by The Netherlands would be replaced from other sources. "Take heart," he told them. "Our enemies are all under close observation. There is no need to be worried." Then, in a passage suggesting the authorship of poet "Dobru," he continued:

What we will have is what we ourselves will have built; what we will value is what we ourselves can defend; what we shall get is what we will wrest for ourselves; what we shall be is what we will have made of ourselves. We have chosen to be a free and prosperous people and that is what we shall be. Let the Nativity, with its triumph of light over darkness, of good over evil, be a beacon for us in this struggle.<sup>41</sup>

Such lyrical rhetoric did little to paper over the public horror and the disintegration of Bouterse's civilian support. The new government that Bouterse had boasted would be in office by Christmas seemed to recede indefinitely from view. Like the bells of a political leper, telephone calls from the "*Bevel*", as he was referred to,<sup>42</sup> were feared so much that a number of prominent leftists went into hiding or exile rather than be summoned into collaboration.

Within the armed forces, where rumblings of discontent had been heard even before the executions, Bouterse removed over half the officer corps from

active service. Most of them, having received training in The Netherlands and supplemental pay from The Hague thereafter, were now suspected of potential disaffection under the aid cutoff. Commanders of the air force and intelligence left, as did the early BOMIKA leader Ramon Abrahams, then head of the military police.

Late in January 1983, Roy Horb was arrested, along with several of his aides, on charges of planning Bouterse's overthrow and assassination. Horb, it was revealed, had tendered his resignation as Bouterse's second in command after the December 8 affair. The fact that he was subsequently well received in the streets of Paramaribo—while Bouterse felt obliged, for security reasons, to travel by launch from his riverside home to his riverside headquarters in Fort Zeelandia—reportedly caused even more bad blood between them. On February 3, Horb's body was found hanging in his prison cell, and several days later his three bodyguards died under suspicious conditions—two in a drowning accident, and one in a shooting. The revolution was devouring its own children, leaving Bouterse apparently more powerful and more isolated than ever.

## COMMENTARY

He who cultivates group paranoia as a means of strengthening his control over society risks becoming its greatest victim. Bouterse's allegations of "coup-plotting" against Fred Ormskerk and the Sital-Mijnals group had produced grave doubts about his personal intentions and integrity within six months of the coup. The Hawker "coup attempt" was also based on rather flimsy evidence, or at least was viewed skeptically by those already conditioned to doubt the *Bevel*. The death of Humphrey Keerveld may have conveniently "nipped another coup in the bud," but it could do little to avoid the souring attitudes of more principled radicals toward the fouled revolution. The treatment accorded Chin A Sen, Haakmat, and the Lim A Po constitutional framework revealed an unreasoning lust for power. The one sure counterrevolutionary act, the failed coup by Rambocus, certainly strengthened Bouterse's paranoia. But the events of December 8, in which he displaced his own annihilatory intentions onto fifteen friends-turned-foes to justify disposing of them, was sheer criminal insanity.

The events were so shocking that even Bouterse's friends on the Left began to back away from him. Suriname now faced isolation from both East and West. A broad range of foreign embassies remained, uneasily watching what might happen next. But development activity ground to a halt. The depth of the country's dependence upon Dutch development assistance quickly became evident. "What we will have is what we ourselves will have built." This had always been the case. But what Surinamers built was usually with

credits and investment from abroad. What could they do without them?

Popular mobilization, so dramatic at the time of the De Koning visit in July 1980, was no longer easy. *Volkscomites*, in some cases, achieved success in communal projects and validated the idea that local government was long overdue in this tiny but overcentralized society. Nevertheless, wayward leadership at the top doomed any effort to maximize the talent and thrust of local initiative. The only site of effective mobilization, it seemed, was in the armed forces, where Bouterse brilliantly used political indoctrination—and fear—to build solidarity. The ease of the Rambocus takeover of the barracks came as a shock. Now Bouterse would devote considerable time and effort to training and fraternizing with his men. He may have harbored romantic ideas about joining the international ranks of populist revolutionaries. But, first and last, he had to keep his grip on power, whatever might happen to the revolution.

## NOTES

1. *Manifest van de revolutie* (Paramaribo: n.p., May 1, 1981), selection quoted from Chin and Buddingh', 81-82.

2. *De Ware Tijd*, Sept. 2, 1981.

3. This, in general, was the thrust of an address by a Jamaican bauxite union leader to Surinamese government and army leaders in April 1981. *De Ware Tijd*, Apr. 2, 1981.

4. OGEM was nationalized in June 1981, and the Surinamese Electric Company became a wholly public enterprise in early 1982.

5. J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 306-07.

6. Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 246.

7. Brana-Shute, 27.

8. *De Ware Tijd*, Aug. 29, 1981.

9. *Ibid*, Sept. 12, 1981. Horb was also singled out for criticism by radical members of the press for his contacts with the commission.

10. Bram Behr, *Terreur op Uitkijk: Over de moord op de landbouwer Mahes* (Paramaribo: Surinaamse Arbeiders Publikaties, 1981).

11. Reprinted in *Sonde Spikri*, Dec. 27, 1981.

12. Some notices, according to the military, said "Join with the real friends of the people, because that's the only way you can be in a position to make a fist against your real enemies." *25 februari*, a military newspaper, Jan. 23, 1982; quoted in *De Ware Tijd*, Jan. 30, 1982.

13. *De Ware Tijd*, Jan. 18, 1982. In response, see the letter of Emile Wijntuin, *Ibid.*, Jan. 21, 1982.

14. Two ministers, Frank Vreden and Erroll Alibux, had in fact walked out of the Cabinet meeting discussing this issue. *Vrije Stem*, Feb. 19, 1982.

15. *De Ware Tijd*, Feb. 19, 1982.

16. *Ibid.*, Feb. 6, 1982.

17. Progressive Mediaworkers Association of Suriname, *The Revolution Triumphs! The Attempted Counterrevolutionary Coup d'État in Suriname on March 11th and 12th 1982* (Paramaribo: Bureau Volksmobilisatie, 1982), 12. See also testimony given in November 1982 during the trial of the surviving coup leaders.

18. Rumors abound that he was killed by either Sital or Horb. Journalist Sig Wolf argues that the executioner was Bouterse himself. "De vuile handen van Bouterse," *Elseviers Magazine*, Dec. 18, 1982.

19. He was shown to have taken poison. *De Ware Tijd*, Mar. 17, 1982.

20. A cloud of suspicion also hung over the third in command of the military, Henk Fernandes, member of a prominent Surinamese family and popular new battalion commander. Never charged in the coup, Fernandes was killed in a mysterious air crash over Guyana a few weeks later.

21. *De Ware Tijd*, May 21, 1982. Suriname already participated, via the Lomé Agreement, in fairly lucrative aid-and-trade programs with the European Common Market. CBI could also have been a boon to Suriname's diversified raw-material economy, with a variety of nontraditional products that could be developed, given the highly educated and talented population.

22. Baijah Mhango, *Aid and Dependence: The Case of Suriname, a Study in Bilateral Aid Relations* (Paramaribo: SWI, 1984), 115-16.

23. *De Ware Tijd*, July 16, 1982. For the Guyana story, see Thomas J. Spinner, Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945-1983* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984), chs. 8-10; and Percy C. Hintzen, *The Costs of Regime Survival: Racial Mobilization, Elite Domination and Control of the State in Guyana and Trinidad*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 90-100, 183-92.

24. Among other things, the Bar Association called on Ramdat Misier, as the country's former top judicial officer, to resign from the presidency. He refused (or was not permitted) to do so.

25. Ms. De Hart says that after a few days in prison all charges were dropped. She insists that she had really been punished for refusing to *regelen* (take bribes and bend the rules), as had been the custom at CIS both before and after the coup.

26. Rekenkamer van Suriname, *Verslag 1980-1987* (Paramaribo: Rekenkamer, Sept. 1989), 21. Among the military's first actions when they came to power was to weaken the Rekenkamer, with the effect that there were no annual reports on government accounting for an eight-year period.

27. Haakmat, 160.

28. Amsterdam: Jan Mets, 1987.

29. *De Ware Tijd*, Nov. 23, 1982.

30. *De Ware Tijd*, Nov. 1, 1982.

31. Osvaldo Cárdenas, *De Revolutie van Sergeanten* (Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit, 1988), 14.

32. In this study we can distinguish between two kinds of corporatism. One, identified with Italian and Portuguese fascism and Latin American authoritarianism, subjects interest groups to the control of the state—they are recognized and given political articulation in return for demonstrations of loyalty (see Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *Review of Politics* 36 (Jan. 1974): 85-131; repr. in Frederick Pike and Thomas Stritch, eds., *The New Corporatism: Socio-Political Structures in the Iberian World* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974). Schmitter points out a more recent group-based political phenomenon, which he calls "neocorporatism." This is what we find germinating in this crisis. As Schmitter puts it:

Neocorporatism...is concerned primarily with the activities of permanently organized and specialized *associations*....These associations seek to advance or defend interests by influencing and contesting collective choices. And they do this by intermediating between members and various interlocutors (mostly the State) without presenting candidates for electoral approval or accepting direct responsibility for the formation of governments. ("Democratic Theory and Neocorporatist Practice," *Social Research* 50, no. 4 [Winter 1983]: 885-928; repr. in Roy C. Macridis and Bernard E. Brown, eds., *Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings*, 7th ed. [Pacific Grove, Calif: Brooks/Cole, 1990], 267)

33. Peter Hoefnagels, "Schrikbeeld Paramaribo," *NRC-Handelsblad*, Dec. 9, 1982. Tape recordings reportedly exist of Bouterse ordering the fire department to keep away from these sites. When Cuban Ambassador Osvaldo Cárdenas asked Bouterse why he didn't just nationalize the offending media instead of destroying them, "I was stunned by his answer: 'They'd accuse us of Communism!'" (Cárdenas, 46).

34. Sig Wolf, "De vuile handen van Bouterse," *Elseviers Magazine*, Dec. 18, 1982.

35. [J. Sariman], *De Decembermoorden: Verslag van een ooggetuige* (Bussum: Het Wereldvenster, 1983), 40.

36. *NRC-Handelsblad*, May 19, 1987.

37. Interview, Nita Ramcharan, Aug. 17, 1990.

38. Interview, Ernie Brunings, Aug. 11, 1990.

39. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Dec. 13, 1982.

40. *De Decembermoorden*, 43.

41. *De Ware Tijd*, Dec. 27, 1982.

42. From *Bevelhebber*, meaning commander.

## 5

# Zig-Gezag

Everyone knows what they're getting with Bouterse. He is no adventurer out for his own interest. Do I need two houses? Three autos? I barely even use the security service for my transportation. Do I need land? If suddenly I'm dead and gone, what am I going to do with them? Take them with me to my grave?

Desi Bouterse, November 1984

For the next few years, Suriname's development was highlighted by unprecedented public wariness, continued infighting among the revolutionary elite, increasing international ostracism, and rapidly deteriorating economic conditions. As pointed out in Chapter 4, there was even fear among many leftists of being tapped for a government ministry. Gary Brana-Shute had noted in 1981 that "the public is cautious and watching like 'cats looking from the trees.'"<sup>1</sup> Now the *oude rotten* and even some of the younger ones were up there too. One sign of how Bouterse and the revolution stood with the public after the December murders came on the third anniversary of the February 25 coup. Photographs in *De Ware Tijd* showed military parades through the downtown area of Paramaribo with no apparent onlookers.

In mid-January, as the hunt for a Cabinet continued, Bouterse moved in the ideological direction of Chas Mijnaals and Badrissen Sital. He spoke more frequently of setting up a "people's democracy" and of worker participation in the management of companies. Mijnaals' model of a people's democracy was

clearly patterned after the Cuban and Grenadan multitiered systems with (1) directly elected local councils; (2) indirectly elected district (i.e., provincial) councils; (3) an indirectly elected national Congress; and (4) a "politburo" (or executive Cabinet) accountable to the Congress. Since the Revolutionary Front set up by Bouterse two years before was no longer in evidence, it was not clear what party (if any) would be expected to provide the infrastructure to guide these bodies; but the restrictive nature of representation and the Marxist terminology in which it was couched excited little immediate support.

When the new government was finally unveiled at the end of February, its mix of parties suggested that Bouterse was in no rush to choose a favorite or to organize a new party of his own. Erroll Alibux became Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Fellow PALU members took over Finance, Public Works, Agriculture, and Social Affairs. The RVP was given three ministries, and independent radicals three more.

Notable for their absence in the new government were Harvey Naarendorp and Henk Herrenberg. The latter, Paramaribo's flamboyant ambassador in The Hague, had returned after the killings to serve as Cabinet *informateur*—a job that usually leads to the prime ministership. In this case, Herrenberg ended up back in The Hague. Naarendorp—independent but pro-RVP—accepted a position as personal adviser to Bouterse. Thus, with this direct line to the boss, the RVP was still in the picture despite reports of the PALU's ascendancy. As the months passed, rumors circulated of mounting conflict between Naarendorp and Alibux over a variety of issues. Bouterse may have enjoyed the disarray among his small radical allies for the many opportunities it offered him to play the umpire—as well as to hold them in his grasp.

## ALIBUX AND THE WORLD

Alibux's first problem was to break out of the international isolation precipitated by the December killings. His, and Iwan Krolis's, view of the international scene made it imperative to stand up to the Dutch—to complete the independence of Suriname by a firm anticolonial position. This contrasted sharply with the RVP's reading of the world, which saw the United States and world capitalism as the enemy, and Marxist and other revolutionary regimes as the models for their foreign affairs. Harvey Naarendorp, in Managua for a Non-Aligned Movement meeting, came back boasting of good ties between Suriname and Nicaragua.

If the PALU was more anti-Dutch than the RVP, the mobilization of an anti-Bouterse sentiment in The Netherlands only reinforced their inclination for head-on confrontation. Political exiles, led by Chin A Sen, organized a *Bevrijdingsraad* (Liberation Council) in The Netherlands, and *Weekkrant Suriname* turned into an important forum for resistance, its issues smuggled

into Suriname at some risk. A feeble though sometimes violent counter, the *Liga van Patriotten* (League of Patriots) was established by a small group of Bouterse supporters in The Netherlands. Their ostensible goal was to present the military's side of the story.

Besides the Dutch, American, and other aid cutoffs, Suriname's leadership had taken other poundings. The long-awaited decision on Suriname's admission to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was postponed indefinitely by that body, Suriname's resolution condemning the Dutch aid cutoff was watered down and stripped of any reference to The Netherlands at the Non-Aligned Movement conference at New Delhi in February, and the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva and the Socialist International both condemned the killings. Despite these failures, Bouterse could claim useful new contacts. He flew to the New Delhi conference with Maurice Bishop in Fidel Castro's plane, and on the return trip, Castro introduced Bouterse to Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya.

Of somewhat more practical significance, the press and government of Brazil had expressed great concern about the bloodshed and political volatility in their neighbor to the north. Hoping that Suriname's weaknesses could be transformed into strengths by taking advantage of Brazil's alarm, Alibux invited Cuban and Brazilian representatives to Paramaribo to explore closer ties (and foreign assistance). In mid-April, General Danilo Venturini, chairman of the Brazilian National Security Council, flew to Paramaribo, reportedly to express his government's concern about the "Cuba line" followed in Suriname. The agreement that was finally worked out—limited, no doubt, by Brazil's growing liquidity crisis—was mainly a set of barter deals: Suriname would sell fifty tons of rice and eighty tons of alumina to Brazil in exchange for arms shipments sufficient to allow Suriname's army of 1,500 men to double in size. Brazil would extend \$15 million in credit and provide technical assistance for twenty-five projects in agriculture, telecommunications, hydroelectric power, and other areas.<sup>2</sup>

The Brazilian deal, closed at the end of May, followed by a few days a far less extensive deal with the Cubans that brought several dozen Cuban technicians to Paramaribo and sent 150 Surinamese students to Cuba. If the Brazilians had been pushed by the Surinamese into a bidding contest, their terms were clear: the Cuba-line politics must be abandoned. Within two weeks, Bouterse seemed to acquiesce; Badrissen Sital and Stanley Joeman, the "military politicians" most active in the popular mobilization movement, were exiled to Cuba.

Once again, Bouterse was able to withstand a rupture in his inner circle with minimal damage. The Brazilian deal had been accompanied on May 31 by the revelation on American television of a plan by the CIA to overthrow his government that was to have been launched early in 1983.<sup>3</sup> The CIA threat probably rallied the "revolutionaries" together—even as Bouterse

expelled the strategically placed Cuba-liners. For the next month, Bouterse railed against the United States and the CIA at every opportunity, while sending Alibux and his new army second in command, Capt. Iwan Graanoogst, to Brasilia to work out more details of the Brazilian connection.

On the eve of Suriname's Abolition Day, July 1, Bouterse declared a day of national unity. Ten thousand Surinamers turned out, many carrying giant pictures of Bouterse, Che Guevara, and Anton de Kom, the radical national hero of the 1930s. The crowd listened in good humor as Bouterse asserted Suriname's right to choose its friends and to support revolutionaries everywhere. He defended the December 1982 executions by asserting that the "bloodbath planned by the CIA had to be impeded." "We'll never be good friends of imperialism," he declared. To build up the people's defenses, Bouterse promised the inauguration of a new movement—the February 25 Unity Movement, presumably building on the now dormant Revolutionary Front.

For its November 25 inauguration, he set a target of 75,000 to be present in Revolutionary Square. All the building-block groups in the Revolution should raise money for this unprecedented event, he urged. After the stony reception given to the Revolutionary Front and the coup's anniversary celebrations, one wonders what the *Bevel* was thinking. Besides the *volkscomites*, however, Bouterse had deepened the supportive infrastructure with "anti-intervention committees," people's militias, and youth brigades—all of them seeking to produce "Unity in Production and Struggle," the slogan (taken from the writings of Anton de Kom) applied to the mobilization of the new movement. The new, restructured university was given its own assignment. With its name now changed to Anton de Kom University, Bouterse urged its members "to marry knowledge and politics and provide the guidance for how our further development can take place."

At the same time that he worked off his wrath at the United States, Bouterse became more conciliatory toward those old-line politicians who had generally been inactive since the coup. He reportedly extended amnesty to those who had fled the country, and invited his enemies at home and abroad to enter into talks. Only a few members of the NPS accepted these invitations, but they held a number of meetings with Bouterse. In late September a two-man NPS delegation traveled to The Hague to explore grounds for talks with the motherland. Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister Erroll Alibux visited Washington for talks at the State Department. Bouterse then joined him in New York, where he spoke to the General Assembly of the United Nations. Despite the growing confrontation in the eastern Caribbean, Bouterse omitted any reference to Grenada or Cuba. Instead, he called for the removal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan. This may have been intended as a moderating gesture, for a mission of highly respected NPS leaders was soon on its way to The Hague to try to negotiate the reinstatement of Dutch aid.

If the Bouterse regime received a cautious nod of approval from Washington, it was not reiterated in The Hague. A spokesperson for the Dutch Minister of Development Assistance said that nothing had changed in the conditions for the unfreezing of economic aid: there must be (a) a return to democracy, including the restoration of an independent judiciary; (b) a free press; and (c) freedom of speech. Moreover, (d) there must be an "acceptable explanation" for the December killings. Although the NPS envoys claimed to be bringing concessions on every point, their talks with the Dutch apparently foundered. Bouterse had not put his head on the NPS trading block after all, and the Dutch seemed unwilling to settle for anything less.

On the same day (October 25, 1983) that U.S. troops invaded Grenada, Bouterse ordered the ouster of the Cuban ambassador and most of his mission. Was this the final payment for the Brazilian aid package? Something toward which the ouster of Sital and Joeman were earlier tokens, along with the tempered rhetoric at the United Nations? Or was it possible that the overthrow and death of Maurice Bishop (October 19) led a paranoid Bouterse to believe that the Cubans had encouraged Bishop's enemies? If they could prompt a coup in Grenada, what would stop them in Suriname? In his televised explanation of the ouster, Bouterse declared that Suriname's relations with Cuba had become "increasingly unmanageable...a result both of the turbulent development of these relations...and more especially of the somewhat individual style of the Cuban ambassador."

Yet even as he was cutting the Cuban mission to a tenth of its previous hundred-plus size, Bouterse dispatched his ambassador in The Hague, Henk Herrenberg, to Havana to explain his actions and to proceed with preparations to raise Suriname's representation in the Cuban capital from legation to embassy status. In January 1984, Bouterse announced that he would allow the Cuba-liners (Sital, Joeman, and others) to return from Cuba; on February 20, Sital was back in Paramaribo. If there was any consistency in Bouterse's behavior toward his "revolutionary family," it was his inconsistency.

## **THE IMF AND A LEADERLESS STRIKE**

The crisis at year's end seemed to bear this out, while also pointing to a basic pragmatism that Bouterse may well have brought with him from the playing fields and his days as a long-distance runner. Bouterse had let himself be persuaded by Prime Minister Alibux and Finance Minister Winston Caldeira that an effort should be made to parlay the Brazilian connection and Washington's apparent neutrality into support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In October 1983, in talks with the IMF, Caldeira hammered out the details of a structural adjustment policy worth \$100 million in credits. The only catch was the IMF's customary austerity package—a combination of

cutbacks in subsidies and other government expenditures together with higher taxes.<sup>4</sup> The PALU leaders returned to Paramaribo determined, incredibly, to bite the austerity bullet. Now we would see whether the December murders had really bought them the public passivity necessary for restructuring the economy.

In June they had hiked the taxes paid by Suralco, Alcoa's local subsidiary. Now they raised the tariffs on luxury imports and announced a new income-tax surcharge for the 5,000 bauxite workers, the best-paid in the country. The IMF had evidently wanted much more, particularly a 12.5 percent cut in the government payroll (which would have involved as many as 5,000 jobs). No sooner had the new taxes been announced than bauxite workers at Suralco went on strike, followed two days later by their counterparts at Billiton (the Shell subsidiary). The strikes had the side effect of cutting off 20 percent of Suriname's power, since the hydroelectric dam that provides electricity for the smelters sells its excess power to Paramaribo and the surrounding area. For each day they continued, the strikes cost Suriname close to \$1 million in revenues.

What was unusual was the absence of any spokesperson or identifiable leadership among the strikers. Fred Derby, usually a firebrand on their behalf, pleaded with the workers to go back to work, as did Bouterse. As the strike entered its third week, the Suralco management began to talk of shutting down operations, and Bouterse lashed out at the strikers, accusing them of destabilizing the revolution. His words seemed only to encourage others to show solidarity with the strike, for now the workers at the power plant walked out, completing Paramaribo's blackout. Alibux and Caldeira offered to rescind the income-tax surcharge, but the bauxite workers, as if to confirm Bouterse's accusation, rejected the offer.

Bouterse now demanded the resignation of the Alibux government. His criticism? Trying to get the IMF loan in the first place. "But Commander," protested Caldeira, "the Policy Center [comprising the Cabinet and top military officials, presided over by Bouterse himself] agreed to it." "Indeed," answered the *Bevel*, "but that doesn't free you from the responsibility that it was very, very bad."<sup>5</sup> The Cabinet resigned on January 9, 1984. But this was not enough to appease the workers. At the smelters and power plant, banners were displayed calling for an end to the military government.

This new turn produced two reactions: first, a military effort to seize Suralco—rebuffed by workers who threatened to use stocks of mining explosives stored on the premises to defend themselves; and second, Suralco's decision to deactivate its smelters and close down its refining operations. (Reactivation of the plant, it was reported, would take three to six months before production could be resumed. But closure might be more than temporary. Thus, Suralco's action—hostile to all and charitable only to its parent company, Alcoa—helped speed things toward a settlement.)

Although not as explicitly political as the Suralco action, other solidarity strikes were announced—at the country's banks and insurance companies, by bus drivers and by secondary-school students. These, too, were so carefully organized as to be effectively leaderless, permitting no reprisals. A mass demonstration was called for Friday, January 20, and while 2,000 or 3,000 bauxite workers marched through downtown Paramaribo—the first such action since before the killings—Bouterse met with a delegation of strikers, offering a loan fund to cover some of their expenses as well as a union voice in the next government. A mass meeting followed, at which 60 percent of the bauxite workers voted their assent to Bouterse's power-sharing proposal. Work at Suralco was resumed on January 23.

Bouterse now announced the formation of an interim "crisis government," composed of representatives to be chosen by the business community, labor unions, and the revolutionary (i.e., military) leadership. As negotiations among the three groups proceeded, it was agreed that the new government, among other things, would be empowered to draft a constitution for presentation to the public in a referendum to be held in 1985. The government was also authorized to restore, as quickly as possible, the freedoms of speech and the press. Was this corporatist model<sup>6</sup> really going to be capable of democratic political articulation and decision-making? Or was it a facade for an authoritarian version of corporatism suggested by the Latin American experience?<sup>7</sup>

### **STANVASTE AND MOVE IT!**

Despite the prospect of broader power-sharing, and the removal of the PALU and RVP people from the government, Bouterse continued to push his plan for a 25th of February Unity Movement. Efforts to gather a record-breaking crowd at the November 25 rally had been a failure, yet Bouterse was confident that the political movement was still on track. He gave it the nickname "*Stanvaste*," a Surinamese term for a popular local flower and the hoped-for symbol ("stand fast") for the revolution. Reminding his audience that this was "a movement, not a party," he invited everyone, including existing organizations and parties, to apply for membership. On February 2, an intensive, weeklong training program began, run by Harvey Naarendorp, Jules Wijdenbosch, and Capt. Etienne Boerenveen, for thirty candidates for leadership positions in the movement.

Finally, on May 14, in a ceremony at Zanderij, Suriname's international airport forty miles south of Paramaribo, 3,000 people witnessed the official inauguration of the *Vijfentwintig Februari Beweging* (25th of February Movement, VFB). Its officers included Bouterse as chairman, Paul Bhagwandas<sup>8</sup> as treasurer, and Etienne Boerenveen (garrison commander in

Paramaribo) as secretary. The *NRC-Handelsblad* estimated an initial membership of 1,000, most of these civilian and military members of the popular mobilization drive, popular militia units, and anti-intervention committees.

Bouterse's choice of Zanderij for the unveiling revealed his continuing concern for security and avoidance of public embarrassment. It is doubtful that room existed for any but the most subservient—or unprincipled—loyalists in the VFB. Its organization explicitly set out to achieve the party-state penetration one associates with the "vanguard socialist model." Harvey Naarendorp, serving as secretary-general of its organizing committee, declared that political cells would "be developed in each workplace." Other political organizations would be permitted to exist, he said, but the movement's primary goal was to integrate Suriname's highly fragmented social, cultural, and political infrastructure in the cause of national unity.

An example of the movement's cell structure was provided by Winston Lenz, "section chairman for government." Lenz reported that members of his section had been appointed to take responsibility for one or more ministries. Within the ministries, cell leaders would be assigned to coordinate the work of the government offices, to inform the cell members assigned to them of the government's policies, and to pursue the goals of the movement. These cell coordinators for the ministries were not to be equated in power with the ministers, Lenz said. But he admitted that confusion could exist as to the functions of each. Lest too much be read into these totalitarian devices, one should probably recall the paralyzing effect of spoils and obstruction that ethnic politics had worked on the system before the *ingreep*.

Lieutenant Laurens Neede, one of the original BOMIKA leaders and now chairman of the "section for popular structures," described similar organizational efforts that had been going on since early in the Revolution at the neighborhood level. People's committees, he said, were especially busy with political education, raising the popular masses' consciousness about Suriname's history, the situation in Central America, political ideology, the IMF, and so on. As Neede put it, "Only when people understand how the world works politically shall Surinamers actually see the need for revolution and therefore participate in it."<sup>9</sup> Here, again, the VFB was merely following the example of the NPS, VHP, and other "old parties" by taking its educational proselytizing to the yards and street corners.

To some extent it worked. Allegations of counterrevolutionary activity being plotted by the Dutch and French governments with the Surinamese exile community provided occasions for large protest marches and demonstrations targeted at the French and Dutch embassies in Paramaribo. The apparent culmination of the *Stanvaste* mobilization came on the fifth anniversary of the coup, when Bouterse was able to gather as many as 30,000 in Revolutionary Square for a daylong festival of music and rhetoric.

## CORPORATIST GOVERNMENT

The Prime Minister of the new tripartite Cabinet, appointed February 4, 1984, was Wim Udenhout. Before his rise to influence in the Bouterse camp, Udenhout had joined the short-lived Black Power movement of the early 1970s while teaching English in secondary school. The populist anti-imperialism that ran through the Caribbean's Black Power movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s found a consistent echo in the rhetoric of Bouterse, and while Marxist slogans came easily to his and Udenhout's speech, they might best be seen as part of a more amorphous, anticolonial Black Power legacy that raged at exploitation and discrimination without being tied to doctrinaire programs. Trinidad's Black Power organizers had tried to reassure East Indians in 1970 that, as an exploited group, they, too, were "black" and had nothing to fear.<sup>10</sup> This was not the kind of thinking that underlay the short-lived Black Power movement in Suriname. Hindustanis had ousted the Creoles in 1969, and they, with their Creole collaborators and the whites, were seen as enemies. Ten years or more had passed, however, and Suriname's Black Power ideologues had fanned out across the horizon. Whatever his thinking, Udenhout won the confidence of the *Bevel* and enjoyed the longest tenure of any of his Prime Ministers.

Udenhout's eclectic pragmatism might be seen in his trip to the United States shortly after he was sworn in, to apply for foreign aid under President Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative, and in Finance Minister Marcel Chehin's simultaneous renewal of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. Although both of these efforts ultimately came to naught, Bouterse and his government ministers were now committed to a more neutral foreign policy, making contacts at every conceivable port of call. But, except for some modest lines of credit and barter arrangements, the Udenhout government found itself meeting its payroll primarily by printing money.

Besides its economic challenges, Udenhout's government was expected to produce the "lasting democratic structures" promised in the January resolution of the bauxite strike. Each of the component groups in the tripartite government had its own standpoint: the military/*Stanvaste* group sought to institutionalize its leadership role, business sought constitutional guarantees and public accountability through free elections, and the unions sought a corporatist structure guaranteeing their built-in representation. As the three groups tried to clarify their positions internally and pursue them in negotiations with the other two, new confusion arose as to where final authority in the constitutional debate resided: was it the tripartite Cabinet, to whom the issue had been assigned? Or was it better left to the informal *denkgroep* (or "think tank") composed of the leaders of the military, unions, and business federations (none of whom had taken a Cabinet position)?<sup>11</sup> Kibitzing on all fronts, the

*denkgroep* clearly complicated Udenhout's work, ultimately taking the "democratization project" out of his hands completely.

The unions rejected the military's insistence on remaining the country's ultimate authority, and called for direct elections to district councils as soon as possible. Once that was accomplished, they wanted the institution of a corporatist assembly representing functional groups (employees, workers, churches, and the military) as well as representatives of the district councils. The military remained intent upon building what it called a "participation democracy" from the ground up—involving citizens in local decision-making at their workplace and in their neighborhoods and districts, with representatives at higher levels being chosen indirectly, by local councils. Presumably the local bodies and the higher ones, if chosen this way, would be easier for the military to handle.

The business groups were eager to see constitutional government restored as quickly as possible. Their idea for a new national assembly was that it be chosen in free and open elections. Though they were at odds with the unions on this point, they worked with them effectively, winning two concessions of significance from the military: the interim National Assembly would be recognized as the highest lawmaking body, and the union and business blocs would hold a majority of seats within it.

Fred Derby wanted an elaborate functional representation, with up to seven categories of groups to be represented in the corporatist legislature: "the revolutionary leadership," unions, business, religious groups, women, youth, and the district councils. Only three seats in his proposed twenty-five-seat body would be allotted to "the revolutionary leadership," however. This was unacceptable to the military, who insisted on fourteen out of thirty-one seats. They rejected the unions' model, preferring the simpler tripartite form. The unions would be assigned eleven seats in this arrangement, with six for the business federations. Derby and the other union leaders finally accepted these terms, as did the Association of Surinamese Manufacturers. However, the Union of Surinamese Businesses, holding out for free and open elections, refused to take the seats allotted it when the National Assembly began its work in January 1985.

The introduction of functional, or corporatist, representation in the interim National Assembly was an interesting variation on the traditional consociational pattern of Surinamese politics. By expanding the tripartite Cabinet arrangement operating in 1984 into a National Assembly, the group foundation was to be expressly occupational, not ethnic. Whether this remodeling of the political infrastructure could draw public acceptance sufficient to bury ethnic rivalry and divisiveness once and for all was another question. Bouterse put it bluntly in an interview in November: "The masses still don't understand what it's all about. The people must be mobilized behind the ideas that I have."<sup>12</sup> More accurately, the functional model had

been the proposal of Chas Mijns and the NMR back in 1980. Had it been adopted earlier, say, as part of the Lim A Po proposal, its legitimacy might have been considerably enhanced.

As it was, the leaders of Suriname's two largest old parties, Lachmon and Arron, publicly called for a directly elected National Assembly and a state structure in which the military would be represented on a Council of State holding special powers to guarantee "general democratic control." Although their proposal was rejected, it was not forgotten. It would provide the broad outline for the 1987 constitution. But despite rejection by the old party leaders, Bouterse continued to meet with Lachmon periodically. In October, Lachmon told Bouterse that the corporative assembly idea was "undemocratic" and warned that the Dutch would not restore aid until national elections of some kind were held. His prediction was correct. Minister of Development Cooperation Elli Schoo in The Hague regretted the absence of a public referendum on the interim government proposal and indicated that the Dutch Cabinet had no thought of restoring aid to Suriname under the present circumstances.

Fred Derby probably could not be accused of understatement when he later advised designated members of the new legislature that "You will all be accused that as members of the assembly you have not been chosen through elections and that you...have gotten your seat in an undemocratic way....It is only with difficulty that new ideas take the place of old ones." As if to illustrate his point, representatives of the *Moederbond* were warned by their international affiliate, the ICFTU, to keep their distance from Bouterse and the radicals around him. Bill Donovan, globe-trotting representative of the AFL-CIO and its foreign affairs affiliate, the American Institute for Free Labor Development, managed to have the *Moederbond* suspended from the ICFTU in 1986 when it accepted participation in the corporatist experiment. (The suspension was lifted in 1988.)

Early in January 1985, the members of the new National Assembly took their oaths of office from Fred Ramdat Missier, now completing his third year as acting President. The fourteen delegates representing the "revolutionary sector" were mostly civilians (Chas Mijns was the only exception); the eleven delegates representing the unions included special representatives for small-scale farmers, women, and youth (the unions shared out some of their allotted seats to keep their more elaborate functional model alive); and the six representatives of the business community included two businessmen and four functionaries from the public and private sectors.

The first public meeting of the new body, under the chairmanship of Ulrich Aron ("revolutionary sector"), heard at least one member of the business delegation (Waldo Ramdihal) remind the others that his faction "did not belong to those who wish to break with everything in the past, since the past has produced many great Surinamers, many hardworking and patriotic citizens, as

well as many positive developments for the building of our country." Still, as rhetoric filled the legislative chamber again for the first time since August 1980, the new representatives appeared to be less inclined than their predecessors to engage in lively debate.

A modified Cabinet, headed once again in 1985 by Wim Udenhout, reflected a distribution of ministries that was slightly more favorable to the unions and business than before. Unions received four posts (compared with two in 1984), and business got three (compared with two in 1984), while the "revolutionary sector" was reduced from ten to eight. In fact, counting double portfolios, the number of individuals in the Cabinet rose from nine to twelve, and the sectoral distribution narrowed from 5-2-2 to 5-4-3 between the "revolutionaries," unions, and business.

### SLIDING RESERVES—AND STANDARDS

If the determination of those with the guns counted double, the VFB and Bouterse's corporatist government still would have hit rock bottom in 1984. It was an astounding story. Suriname's remarkable economic position at independence—hefty gold and foreign exchange holdings with a minimal foreign debt (the latter standing at about 8 percent of the former)—had changed only marginally by the end of 1981 (with foreign debt at about 11 percent of gold and foreign exchange holdings). Thanks to a Dutch aid program yielding approximately \$100 million per year, Suriname had enjoyed budget surpluses of over \$9 million in 1979 and over \$11 million in 1980. But these were replaced by deficits of \$24 million in 1981, \$56 million in 1982, and \$112 million in 1983. Reserves stood at \$60 million in January 1984 (down from \$258 million in 1981), and Suriname was reportedly running through them at a rate of \$10 million a month. Meanwhile, its reserve coverage for Surinamese currency had dropped from 100 percent in 1980 to 15 percent in 1983 and 7.5 percent in 1984. The cutoff of Dutch aid after the December 1982 killings had clearly hurt; by the end of the bauxite strike in January 1984, it was estimated that Suriname had sustained an additional \$60 million loss of revenues.<sup>13</sup> What was the difference between Guyana and Suriname? "About five years," someone grimly joked to the *Wall Street Journal*,<sup>14</sup> implying that Suriname's per capita gross national product of \$2,800, nearly triple that of its neighbor, was in great jeopardy.

Thus, the Surinamese governments of Alibux and Udenhout were desperate to find alternative sources of external assistance. Their initial—and continuing—efforts were focused on the United States. In 1984, the International Monetary Fund had estimated that 10,000 to 15,000 of Suriname's 40,000 public servants were redundant. The NCOs had comically shown this to be the case in 1980, yet nothing had been done about it. Still

the IMF continued to dangle a \$100 million loan before both governments that was tied to a dramatic cut in the government payroll and/or devaluation of the Surinamese guilder by 30 to 50 percent. After the events of December and January 1983-84, such moves were politically unthinkable.

The poorest elements in the society were being favored with employment of sorts in the people's militia, the expanded police and armed forces, and another army of informers, censors, and electronic eavesdroppers. Following a time-honored method of displacing the public's growing frustration through an act of aggression, the government chose to scapegoat and expel the estimated 40,000 Guyanese illegal aliens working in the country. The effort, called *Schoonschip* (Clean Sweep), began in January 1985. Over 5,000 Guyanese, Haitians, and Chinese aliens were rounded up in the program's first three weeks. Allegations that a number of the Guyanese were killed, their possessions confiscated, and other human rights violated were aired in the Roman Catholic Church's weekly publication *Om Hoog*, which compared the raids to those under Adolf Hitler and Idi Amin. Police summoned the editor priest, Father Bastiaan Mulder, for interrogation,<sup>15</sup> but protests by the church hierarchy finally produced a government promise to carry out an official investigation.

Ironically, complaints about *Schoonschip* came not only from the church and the Guyanese ambassador, but also from farmers and plantation managers who feared bankruptcy if they lost their illegal work force, since unemployed Surinamese had no inclination to engage in agricultural labor. The popular mobilization movement had not been directed at this critical problem, at least with any success.

If the expulsions had a negative effect on it, agriculture still remained the strongest sector of the economy through 1984. In contrast, the bauxite industry, tripped up by the strike, continued to stumble through one of its worst years. In February 1984, Suralco announced that it was closing one of its mines, and in March it announced a merger with Billiton (Shell) for shared production of alumina. But low water in the reservoir that Suralco had built for hydroelectric power in the 1960s reduced its electric power supply for the alumina and aluminum smelters to 50-55 percent of capacity, prompting executives to expect that Suralco might suffer an unprecedented net loss in 1984.

Word that the company might even close was shrewdly used to exact concessions from Fred Derby's bauxite workers' union in the March 1985 contract negotiations. Government revenues collected from Suralco dropped precipitously from \$48 million in 1982 to \$32 million in 1983, and, with production interrupted by the strike, then cut further by the dam's reduced output, expectations for 1984 were even gloomier. Hans Lim A Po, now the director of Billiton, insisted he was still "optimistic" about the future, despite the slumping world market for alumina and Billiton's relatively high

production costs.

By summer many of the largest commercial establishments in Paramaribo were caught between their striking workers and dangerously shrinking inventories, the latter produced by the government's tighter import and foreign exchange controls. Hotel occupancy at the country's three first-class hotels was around 30-35 percent. The normally packed national airline, SLM, was now flying planes at less than full seating capacity because of much stricter and time-consuming visa procedures. Stringent foreign exchange rules sharply limiting the amount one could take out of the country, and requiring arriving visitors to exchange large amounts for local currency, may have discouraged travel. Despite the reported success of the new oil-drilling operation in Saramacca, Surinamers were warned that they must anticipate fuel shortages and prepare for conservation methods of the sort they had undertaken in the mid-1970s. Shortages of yet another sort were already causing consternation at the Academic Hospital, where simple laboratory equipment such as plastic cups, chemically treated test paper, and X-ray film were being rationed, and special dietary foods and even tea were no longer available for patients.

A report by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) indicated a 3 percent drop in Suriname's gross national product (GNP) for 1983. Unemployment, according to the IDB, was 18 percent, and industrial production had declined 12 percent. In November, a survey by a team of Dutch economists predicted that the GNP decline for 1984 could be as high as 25 percent. At about the same time, Minister of Finance Marcel Chehin estimated that the budget deficit for 1984 would rise over 50 percent, to \$177 million. How was Suriname financing the deficit? According to Chehin (who would be the only minister *not* returning in the second Udenhout government), it was being done through an "excessive" expansion of the money supply, fueling both inflation and the activities of the black market.<sup>16</sup>

After considering the IMF's requirements for a major currency devaluation and large cuts in government spending, Bouterse finally ordered further negotiations broken off. But where else in this economically retrenched world could one acquire \$100 million a year? In May 1984, the Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation announced that small grants would be made through the Dutch Embassy in Paramaribo directly to private groups for humanitarian projects. Galled by this idea, Prime Minister Udenhout demanded the grants' cancellation and the restoration of the earlier aid program.

As might be imagined, growing economic hardship was accompanied by a wide variety of social and institutional problems. Petty crime was reported at an all-time high, and politically motivated acts of arson—something of a tradition in Suriname—were once again on the rise. A number of arrests were made for smuggling foreign currencies out of the country, the most interesting of which involved a prominent restaurateur, Iwan Lieuw A Joen, caught trying

to board a plane at Zanderij with \$110,000 on his person. Upon interrogating Lieuw A Joen, it appeared that the money actually belonged to Iwan Graanoogst, chief of staff of the Surinamese armed forces and head of the Commission on Imports (where he had earned the nickname "Mister Ten Percent"). Bouterse went through the motions of an investigation, but no arrests were made. Shortly thereafter, the arresting soldier reportedly died of "sunstroke."<sup>17</sup> Graanoogst was also involved with Cecil Guman, head of the state-run export agency. When the latter was caught up in a financial scandal, Graanoogst fell under yet another cloud. He tendered his resignation, pending an investigation, but was restored to his post (as was Guman) in November.

Marxist puritanism was obviously lacking among the leaders. A shipload of Mercedes-Benz automobiles arrived early in 1984, all of them charged to the Ministry of Agriculture. They were reportedly distributed among the military brass and its friends. Bouterse, Graanoogst, and others also played the real estate market, depressed by migration yet still lucrative for insiders thanks to the growing number of foreign missions and international agencies in the country—together with clever speculative marketing among exiles awaiting the military's overthrow. Udenhout managed to move into steadily more luxurious quarters, and Marcel Zeeuw, of the military police, acquired a pair of nightclubs.<sup>18</sup> The most notorious operator, however, was Bouterse himself, who managed to buy a fine riverfront house, had it remodeled at state expense, then sold it back to the state at a gain of over \$700,000 while retaining it as his official residence.<sup>19</sup>

Bouterse was also enjoying his chance to appear on the international stage. In September 1984, Suriname spent over \$300,000 to host the World Military Basketball Championship, an event that put the nation on the military map of much of the world. Then, in anticipation of the fifth anniversary of the coup, invitations were sent to a range of admired heads of state. Fidel Castro, Daniel Ortega, Jerry Rawlings, Muammar al-Qaddafi, and Yasir Arafat were among those Bouterse hoped would attend. In fact, not one showed up.

Despite Qaddafi's absence from their celebration, Bouterse and Udenhout flew to Libya in March 1985 to sign a \$100 million trade and aid package. Under its terms, Suriname would deliver rice and tropical woods to Libya in exchange for standby credits of foreign exchange and cooperation in oil exploration. If the (unspecified) political and/or military provisions in this agreement seemed to risk the wrath of Brazil and France, Bouterse and Udenhout were able to obtain offsetting grants from the European Common Market and from Colombia. At the end of April 1985, Vice Premier Tjon Kie Sim negotiated a \$40 million export-import loan from Taiwan. Suriname would supply Taiwan with tropical woods, and Taiwan would provide technical assistance in agriculture, fishing, food processing, and lumbering.

These resourceful moves, assembling a very diversified political and economic portfolio of credits (and liabilities) prompted the editors of The

Netherlands' most influential paper, *NRC-Handelsblad*, to observe:

It is high time that Suriname makes its own way in the world. In particular, the absence of satisfactory relations in the region can be seen as one of the worst by-products of the long dependency on Dutch aid. But even Bouterse wouldn't want to argue that Libyan oil dollars offer a realistic alternative for the frozen reservoir of Dutch development aid.<sup>20</sup>

That aid remained frozen and, despite the new corporatist political reforms, the Dutch remained unyielding in their demands for democratic elections.

### **OUDE ROTTEN BACK ON BOARD**

Bouterse's continued need to consult—or at least to be seen consulting—with the leaders of the old mass-based Creole and East Indian parties would seem to indicate their continued influence in Surinamese affairs. Yet an atmosphere of fear, regimentation, and economic need drove many Surinamers into the February 25 Movement. Thus, a race between the regime's popular mobilization and its economic decline continued over a treacherous domestic track and before a fairly uninterested international audience. As Suriname's tenth anniversary of independence drew near, Bouterse may have found the means to keep his regime afloat, but otherwise he seemed to be drifting aimlessly.

In June 1984, Lachmon and Arron had taken advantage of a partial restoration of press freedom to call for a directly elected National Assembly. Bouterse had then met with Lachmon to discuss the unions' corporatist proposal. Despite Lachmon's loud condemnation, Bouterse continued to meet secretly with him and Arron over the following year. By the summer of 1985, these meetings were taking place on a weekly basis and had been joined by Willy Soemita, leader of the KTPI. Knowledge of these talks was fairly widespread. As the *NRC-Handelsblad* later put it, "That Bouterse is now returning to the old gamecocks proves that he is really in a hole. Indeed, there are few other leaders whom he can throw in with, because a military dictatorship is not exactly the rich soil in which young politicians abound."<sup>21</sup>

But what was there to sustain the old politicians? Clearly, all sides were gambling. As in the past, Bouterse played one side against the other. His radical military and civilian advisers were alarmed by his talks with the leaders of the old regime, while the progress the radicals were making on their corporatist constitution undoubtedly stimulated the VHP and NPS to be more "realistic" in their attitudes.

But Bouterse had to realize that he was playing with fire. At the celebration of the coup's fifth anniversary, February 25, 1985, he spoke cryptically about leading his country for only another "six months or so." A

few weeks later, Surinamese papers were given even more cryptic reports about a coup being "nipped in the bud" yet again. Military Police Commander Ruben Lieuw Yen Tai denied that Sital, Mijns, and Joeman were among those arrested (which would have marked their third run-in with Bouterse). But the mystery deepened late in May, when *Weekkrant Suriname* reported that Bouterse had gone for an extended rest at Raleigh Falls in the interior. The *NRC-Handelsblad* reported that rumors were flying around Paramaribo, among them that Bouterse had suffered a light stroke, that his battalion commander, Etienne Boerenveen, had been placed under house arrest, and that there had been a palace coup. But Bouterse and Boerenveen soon reappeared, Bouterse to give the traditional Abolition Day address on July 1. No one was placed under arrest, and the significance of this mysterious episode may have been its revelation of the apprehensive and/or wishful thinking in the society. At any rate, the three-way wheeling and dealing continued between Bouterse and the old ethnic parties, on the one hand, and the radical young Turks, on the other.

On Abolition Day, Bouterse announced a series of Cabinet changes, including the appointment of several members of the old political parties. While the leaders of the VHP and NPS refused to take Cabinet positions, KTPI leader Willy Soemita assumed the role of Vice Minister of Social Affairs, and Arron and VHP lieutenant Alwin Mungra accepted Bouterse's invitation to join a Surinamese delegation to the Inter-American Debt Conference in Cuba. It was Arron's first trip outside Suriname since the coup that toppled him in 1980. Despite the friendly gesture, Bouterse used the ongoing state of emergency to prevent the NPS from holding its first formal mass meeting since the coup.

In August 1985, when the constitutional commission was finally appointed by Bouterse, a timetable was announced. The commission would produce its working paper by November 1, and a draft constitution would emerge from the National Assembly a year later. This would be followed by a three-month period of public discussion, necessary legislative adjustments, and finally a public referendum.

While attention was focused on this future *de jure* system, Bouterse persuaded the National Assembly to declare that his position (as commander of the National Army and chairman of the *Beleidscentrum* (Policy Council) made him "head of government," leaving his civilian premier (Udenhout) and acting president (Ramdat Misier) as lesser figures in Suriname's revolutionary system of protocol. Since he had effectively held this position since 1980, it seemed curious that he would need to reassert his *de facto* powers now. Such a title permitted him to address the U.N. General Assembly's fortieth session in New York that October.

Accompanied by his wife and a number of civilian and military government officials, Bouterse may have accumulated the biggest collective expense account in Surinamese history. His October 22 speech to the General

Assembly earned him (and Suriname) a respectable twelve column inches in the *New York Times*. Without naming the Dutch government, he attacked the use of foreign aid as a tool for exerting political pressure. Sytze van der Zee, in the *NRC-Handelsblad*, noted that this was a considerably moderated speech compared with those of 1983 and 1984. However, Bouterse's failure to mention the "democratization process" under way in his country generated further skepticism at home and in The Netherlands.<sup>22</sup>

To compound speculation still further, Chin A Sen's *Bevrijdingsraad* held a press conference in New York at the same time and introduced a military deserter who told in detail of military preparations to blow up the Afobaka Dam in the event of a coup. The dam, some eighty miles upstream from Paramaribo on the Suriname River, was built by Alcoa in the 1960s to provide energy for its smelters as well as for the expanding capital. An engineer at the same news conference estimated that flooding from the dam could kill close to half the population of the country. The military deserter's job, according to Gary Brana-Shute, was to pilot the patrol boat that would be used to evacuate Bouterse from the threatened area.<sup>23</sup>

But the *Bevelhebber* was indefatigable. With the tenth anniversary of independence fast approaching, a show of *verzoening* (reconciliation) was extremely desirable. Talks with the old political parties had continued through the fall. Arron and Lachmon held fast to their demands for general elections in 1986 and were prepared to order the party faithful to boycott the independence celebrations unless Bouterse would agree to their terms for democratization. Bouterse had invited the top leaders of the old parties to his fortieth birthday party, October 13, but he cryptically told his guests, "I don't know how long we will continue to work together. That is not for us to know. Today we're here, but tomorrow we're not." The *NRC-Handelsblad* viewed this as an attempt to put part of the burden for Suriname's economic collapse on the old parties—if they continued to refuse cooperation.

As Bouterse resumed his deliberations with the *oude rotten*, the legislative options he offered were virtually unchanged: (1) direct and indirect elections based upon the three-tiered Cuban model, urged by Chas Mijns, or (2) functional (and party) representation in the National Assembly and on the new Supreme Policy Council (*Topberaad*)<sup>24</sup> to be nominated by the VFB, union, business, and party leaders. But the old parties had steadfastly refused to take seats in the National Assembly, demanding instead a formal guarantee of free, general elections as their price for cooperating in the transition process.

Rumors that a power-sharing accord might be reached *without* a guarantee of free elections produced a pained outcry among the exile community. Chin A Sen's *Bevrijdingsraad* warned the Dutch government not to be fooled by sham democracy. Former member of Parliament Salim Somohardjo, chairman of the Rotterdam-based refugee organization Makmur, said it was foolish of Lachmon and Arron to collaborate with their principal tormentor. At any

moment they could be left in the lurch with no means of retaliation. An "accord" was reached, but it was minimal, placing representatives of the three parties in the *Topberaad*, guaranteeing them input into the constitutional engineering process but not in the more immediate decision-making of the Udenhout government.

Bouterse's reward in all this was both symbolic and substantial. At the tenth anniversary celebrations of Surinamese independence, he stood like a conquering hero, with Lachmon, Arron, and Soemita, on the balcony of the Presidential Palace. They were joined by Udenhout and Eddy Bruma, the latter having chosen political obscurity in recent years, after putting together the Chin A Sen government. Before a crowd in Revolutionary Square estimated at 30,000, each speaker made his pitch for national unity. Lachmon spoke philosophically about perfection being unachievable, making the case that Dutch standards on the resumption of development aid should be eased. But Lachmon was clearly not happy with the pressures he and Arron faced. As he put it to his biographer, Evert Azimullah,

The execution of the political accord of November 23, 1985,<sup>25</sup> read at a mass meeting on November 25, 1985 in Independence Square, was, due to circumstances, not carried off in the desired tempo. Only at the beginning of February 1986 were the political parties able to put forward a concept of action principles by which to carry it out.<sup>26</sup>

Bouterse's power was still 100 percent intact, however, for the November 23 accord said nothing of ending the state of emergency, returning the military to the barracks, or holding free elections of any kind. *De Ware Tijd*, reduced to a quasi-governmental organ after the December 1982 killings, unexpectedly questioned the accord from another angle. Since the locus for decision-making regarding the new constitution (according to the timetable announced in August) would be the National Assembly, the parties' participation in the *Topberaad* clearly left their role and powers regarding the democratization process very ambiguous. Would business and labor represent their interests in the National Assembly?

As of the beginning of 1986, the *Topberaad* now included eighteen members—fast approaching the National Assembly in size and political cumbersomeness. Nevertheless, the distribution of power within it should have been encouraging for the cause of democracy. Theoretically, the "revolutionaries" (including Bouterse) were outnumbered sixteen to two. Even if all the union delegates might somehow be lured to the "revolutionaries'" side, Bouterse would still be outmanned ten to eight—as if voting in the *Topberaad* counted for anything.

In December, a five-man committee of the National Assembly submitted its *politieke raamwerk* (political framework) of constitutional objectives to the larger body. The latter was then to debate these principles and move on to

drafting the part of the constitution that would establish governmental structures. This phase was to be completed in May 1986. But discussion of the framework was very heated. *Weekkrant Suriname* reported that committee chairman Chas Mijnals had rejected all ideas but those emanating from his own legislative bloc. In the public debates, the business bloc objected to the insistence on Marxist-style terminology for all references to the past. And both it and the labor sector objected to the idea that, "to assure freedom of expression," all communications media should be in the hands of the government. By March 1986 the media clause had been dropped, and in principle it was agreed that the preamble and other language should be less provocative. Accordingly, the framework won unanimous approval, and the National Assembly now set to work on the more meaty details of the constitution itself.

On the sixth anniversary of the coup, February 25, 1986, Bouterse announced that the state of emergency would be lifted, presumably restoring the full protections of the law. He also declared that his fellow officers must now be referred to as *commandanten van de revolutie* (commanders of the revolution), giving political recognition to the historic role of the military and perhaps strengthening its political claims to power-sharing—if, in fact, it was ever going to yield center stage.

## ECONOMIC DISASTER

With Bouterse and the old party bosses raising new hopes for the future, the sense of impending economic doom may have receded for many. But conditions of decline were being reported almost daily. World prices were down sharply for all Suriname's principal exports: aluminum, aluminum oxide, bauxite, and rice. Dependency on the American and European markets for much of Suriname's trade may have been disagreeable ideologically to the military and their radical advisers. However, the quality of Suriname's principal export items was too high (measured in hard currency) for Third World countries to buy, and barter agreements—entered into with Brazil, Libya, Iran, Colombia, Taiwan, and other countries—discounted the goods' market value.

While modest oil production in the district of Saramacca had reduced fuel imports somewhat, those imports and many other necessities were put at risk by the shortage of foreign exchange and credit. The IMF reported Suriname's balance of payments deficit at \$71 million in 1983 and \$54 million in 1984. In May, Sytze van der Zee reported that monetary reserves had dropped from \$229 million to as low as \$40 million in 1985 (\$12 million in gold and \$28 million in foreign exchange), and *Weekkrant Suriname* claimed in August that nearly \$20 million worth of goods awaited payment before they could be

unloaded from ships in the harbor.

With an estimated \$15 million in foreign currencies leaving the country as "travel money," controls on incoming and outgoing travelers were tightened still further. Most incoming travelers were obliged to exchange all their foreign currency at the fixed rate of exchange against the dollar, to be redeemed on departure. Flights between The Netherlands and Suriname were reduced, and the total amount of foreign currency a Surinamer could take abroad was Sf 375 (\$208 at the official exchange rate) or, in the case of neighboring Guyana or French Guiana, only Sf 50.

Despite these efforts, a thriving black market had developed, with the Surinamese guilder falling from 1.8 against the dollar to as low as 10 in 1986. (By 1993, it would reach 25 or 30 to 1.) Between \$8 and \$9 million worth of revenues were estimated lost due to the activities of smugglers on the Guyana border alone. The eighty-member Manufacturers Association pleaded for the stimulant of looser import regulations, and the bauxite companies (Suralco and Billiton) argued for devaluation. Both small industries and the mining companies stood on the brink of disaster, and with them rode the most lucrative sources of urban employment. But the Minister of Finance, Norman Kleine, refused to budge.

With bauxite prices down, so were government revenues from that sector—*Latin America Regional Reports—Caribbean* indicated a fall from Sf 150 million in 1980 to 64 million in 1984 and 54 million in 1985. Billiton bitterly complained that it would be ruined if the government did not lower taxes further and/or devalue the guilder. Both Billiton and Suralco argued that labor costs were making Surinamese bauxite (the world leader during World War II) uncompetitive. Accordingly, they insisted upon salary-freeze provisions in new collective labor agreements with their workers. After one such agreement had been hammered out, at the cost of a two-year guarantee of employment, Suralco turned around five months later (in October 1985) and sought the layoff of 500 "redundant" workers. It had already reduced its work force by 1,200 (to 3,300) since 1980, and Billiton had cut even more sharply (from a total force of 1,500 to 750). Despite the government's refusal to approve the layoffs, Suralco placed the workers on nonactive status in early February 1986.

As the major umbrella federation for workers in the industrial sector, the C-47 had its hands full throughout 1985. Besides the troubles at Billiton and Suralco, C-47 workers faced layoffs at Kerstens, the largest local manufacturing (and retail) enterprise in the country; Parbo, the national brewery; the Japanese fishing joint venture, SUJAFI; the Doorson Construction Company; and BATCO, a cigarette factory. The Dutch lumber corporation Bruynzeel sold its 52 percent of shares in Bruynzeel Suriname for what the *NRC-Handelsblad* called "the symbolic amount of Sf 180,000." Whether the government would be able to revive the company and protect its 1,100

remaining workers without heavy subsidies was a question.

Deficit spending grew more and more serious. After deficits of Sf 310 million in 1983 and Sf 285 million in 1984, Minister Kleine asked the National Assembly in July for an increase in the national debt limit from Sf 750 million to Sf 950 million, informing it that the deficit in 1985 was projected at Sf 319 million. But in November, Prime Minister Udenhout (replacing Kleine as Finance Minister) estimated that the 1986 deficit would be nearer Sf 400 million, making it obvious that yet another rise in the debt limit was going to be needed the following year.

The most immediate sign of economic collapse was the wide range of goods in short supply: flour, onions, garlic, salt, cooking oil, margarine, toilet paper, diapers, spare parts of all kinds, and pharmaceuticals. In November, long lines were reported at the bread stores in the early morning hours. In the spring, a shipment of tires was bought up almost immediately upon its arrival. In equally short supply were certain categories of professional skills. Suriname's only urologist left the country in the summer, following by two years the departure of the country's last heart specialist. Even the economists were jumping ship, their number down from forty-three in 1976 to sixteen in 1985.

One of the many jokes making the rounds depicted Satan informing a new arrival of his choices. "In the Dutch Hell we'll throw you into hot tar and then smother you with feathers. In the Surinamese Hell we'll do much the same." "What's the difference?" asks the newcomer. "Well, in the Surinamese Hell, some days there isn't any tar, some days no feathers, and some days there's nothing at all!"<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the only bright light in this grim litany was Agriculture Minister Ranjitsing's report that in 1984 per capita consumption of beef, pork, and milk were up between 25 and 55 percent over a decade earlier. And in most other respects, the domestically produced food supply was holding up, although prices, inevitably, were rising.

Hoarding and black-marketeering were becoming a way of life. Van der Zee reported that Chinese merchants were often arrested on such charges but released after a few days.<sup>28</sup> Such an exercise did little to distract the public from the entrepreneurial behavior of the military and civilian leaders themselves. One of the most notorious cases involved Norman Kleine during his period as Minister of Finance (which ended in September 1985). *Weekkrant Suriname* reports that he refused a local factory an import license for the material to produce toilet paper, instead giving his own company a license to import finished toilet paper, which he then placed on the black market.<sup>29</sup> Brana-Shute tells of two other Kleine manipulations:

As a computer importer, he arranged that his ministry would be equipped with the computers his company imports. He got a rare import license....Also, an arrangement that Surinamese school children must wear uniforms paid off handsomely to his wife who received the concession to import the cloth and tailor the uniforms even though her

shop is too small to provide uniforms in time and in the right quality.<sup>30</sup>

Everybody of some means tried to travel to the abundantly stocked stores of Kourou and Cayenne in French Guiana. As Karl Bagijn of the Dutch *Algemeen Dagblad* reported, "The ordinary Surinamer loads his car in French Guiana full of toilet paper, diapers, and margarine, while a military police official was seen to leave for Paramaribo with the roof of his car loaded with champagne."<sup>31</sup> Van der Zee reported that Bouterse and his chief lieutenants, Etienne Boerenveen, Arti Gorre, Ruben Lieuw Yen Tai, and Paul Bhagwandas, had acquired Brazilian motorboats, noting that it was "inconceivable they could have acquired their boats, Mercedeses, and villas out of their own pockets, since none of them officially earns more than Sf 60,000."<sup>32</sup>

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The U.S. State Department review of human rights conditions around the world, released in February 1986, included a guardedly optimistic appraisal of the situation in Suriname. More negative reports were issued by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in May 1985, and by the Organization of American States at Cartagena in December. Amnesty International reported several mysterious deaths within the Surinamese armed forces, and Van der Zee reported at length on the use of torture in the interrogations at Fort Zeelandia by the military police. As Naushad Boedhoe wrote in the Dutch foreign policy journal *Intermediar*, in March 1985, "anxiety [throughout the society] has risen tremendously after the December killings."<sup>33</sup>

In August 1985, Bouterse went so far as to set up the National Institute of Fundamental Rights and Duties of the Surinamese People, to try to provide an atmosphere of greater trust and cooperation. *Om Hoog*, commenting on its powers as set down in the enabling decree, concluded "that this institute in no way offers us legal security or personal safety, as the military's a priori restrictions on its investigatory powers would cripple it from the outset."<sup>34</sup> As if to confirm these dire assertions, a Catholic priest who was known publicly to commemorate the December killings in every religious service, was expelled from the country. When Bishop Zichem complained, the National Institute found itself powerless to act.

Was Suriname's democratization glass still empty, or was it gradually filling? In The Netherlands, official policy cautiously opted for the latter viewpoint, at least to the point of considering a gradual restoration of economic aid. With some pressures rising in the lower house of the Dutch Parliament to find a means of encouraging the democratization process, Development Cooperation Minister Elli Schoo proposed a humanitarian grant of several million Surinamese guilders for medical and educational aid.

of several million Surinamese guilders for medical and educational aid. Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek was reluctant to put even this amount of money into official hands and preferred to continue the policy of making small-scale grants to private beneficiaries through the embassy in Paramaribo.

As the debate in The Hague reached a head, news arrived that Capt. Etienne Boerenveen had been arrested in Miami, Florida, trying to negotiate a contract with undercover agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency to facilitate the refining and transshipment of cocaine through Suriname, at a million dollars per shipment. Arrested with him were the manager of the Miami office of the Surinamese national airline and the latter's father. Not surprisingly, the Dutch debate over restoring aid came to a shuddering halt.

The drug incident confirmed suspicions generated in 1983 that Suriname was trying to become involved in the international drug-trafficking network linking Colombian cocaine laboratories with the American and European street markets. At that time, Bouterse had sent his ambassador to The Netherlands, Henk Herrenberg, on a mission to Colombia in search of "foreign aid" to replace the annual \$100 million provided by the Dutch. Since Herrenberg had progressed from ambassador to personal adviser and finally to Foreign Minister (early in 1986), one might assume that he had had success in these connections. But Herrenberg had sued a Dutch newspaper for making such an assertion, and despite an ambiguous settlement of the case, he continued to assert his innocence of any such behavior. Bouterse's reaction was that the drug-trafficking suspects had been framed and that the United States was attempting to "destabilize" Suriname.

As it became clear that further housecleaning might be necessary to get the Dutch discussion of aid to resume, Bouterse accepted the retirement of two of his top aides, Paul Bhagwandas and Arti Gorre, men whose harsh methods and violent reputations had made them unpopular with the troops, and even more so in society.<sup>35</sup> Of the original sixteen coup commandos, fewer than half remained, formally at least, in the service of the *Bevel* and the revolution.

## COMMENTARY

Desi Bouterse has more than proven himself a "great man" in the context of Suriname's history. He demonstrated remarkable survival skills in this period, combining intimidation with confident braggadocio and careful (military) institution-building. Although he was not particularly successful in his search for economic support, he did keep his political rivals preoccupied with what now seemed like a constitutional shell game: Would it be a Cuban form of government, corporatist, or a reversion to the Western style?

Bouterse lifted the state of emergency decreed in August 1980 on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of his coup, February 25, 1986. "Adequate

measures have now been established against counterrevolutionaries," he told a gathering, and his dialogue with the political parties was going smoothly. He called 1986 "the year of truth" regarding relations with the motherland. In 1987, he foresaw a beginning to the seven fat years and an end to the seven lean ones.<sup>36</sup> It is doubtful that even his comrades in arms and new friends in the business community could have believed this.

Sytze van der Zee wrote of the "Guyanization of Suriname," implying the continued pauperization and oppression of the Surinamese people.<sup>37</sup> In The Netherlands, Suriname's celebrated playwright Thea Doelwijt produced *Mi kondre tru, mi lobi yu* (My Country True, I Love You), a musical dramatizing the agony of the Surinamese "revolution." Three choices confronted every Surinamer: to forgive, to forget, or to survive.<sup>38</sup> But there was another that was soon to be acted out: resistance!

## NOTES

1. Brana-Shute, 49.

2. London's *Latin America Weekly Report* (Oct. 21, 1983) notes that Brazil agreed to buy eighty tons of Surinamese aluminum as well.

3. *New York Times*, June 1, 1983.

4. Caldeira proposed a reduced government budget and new income taxes, particularly on year-end bonuses, overtime, and other special payments. Among the subsidies open for cutting was that on milk. Caldeira decided against that when he considered having hundreds of cats and dogs deposited at his doorstep. Milk was so cheap, it seemed, that much of it went to feed household pets. Interview, Rudi Schillevoort, July 31, 1990.

5. *Vrij Nederland*, Jan. 14, 1984. The leadership of PALU insists that radicals in the military's popular mobilization program were behind the strikes, seeing them as a means to discredit and remove the PALU from power (interview, Rudi Schillevoort, July 31, 1990). Bouterse's anger and Derby's histrionics in the course of the strike make this claim seem dubious.

6. On the fact of it, this new legislature—with its labor and business representation—resembled the modern European social and economic councils, which function as a kind of "third legislative chamber."

7. Philippe Schmitter provides the best definition:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory,

noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports ("Still the Century of Corporatism?" 93-94).

8. Bhagwandas had been identified by Roy Horb as the chief executioner in the December 1982 killings *De Decembermoorden*, 47-49.

9. *De West*, June 26, 1984.

10. See David G. Nicholls, "East Indians and Black Power in Trinidad," *Race* 12, no. 4 (Apr. 1971): 443-59.

11. In February 1984 this new body had replaced the *Beleidscentrum* as the inner sanctum of policy-making around Bouterse. *De Ware Tijd*, Feb. 6, 1984.

12. *Elsevier's Magazine*, quoted in *Onafhankelijk weekblad Suriname*, Dec. 1, 1984.

13. These figures are from International Trade Administration, *Foreign Economic Trends and their Implications for the United States: Suriname* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Sept. 1982), 2-3; *Onafhankelijk weekblad Suriname*, Feb. 25 and Mar. 3, 1984, Apr. 21, 1985; and *Latin America Regional Reports—Caribbean*, June 15, 1984.

14. *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 7, 1983.

15. *Om Hoog*, Feb. 10 and 16, and Mar. 10, 1985. Father Mulder, a persistent critic of the tripartite government idea (*Om Hoog*, Nov. 25, 1984), called the events of December 8, 1982, a *koenoe* (among the Bush Negroes, an evil spirit or curse) that would oppress "our people" until they had been fully investigated and aired. *Om Hoog*, Dec. 9, 1984.

16. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Nov. 8, 1984. It was estimated that the Surinamese guilder's black market value had fallen from \$0.55 to \$0.35. See the detailed analysis of Henk Chin, a respected Surinamese economist, in *Weekblad Suriname*, Jan. 12, 1985.

17. *Weekkrant Suriname*, Aug. 18 and Sept. 1 and 22, 1984; and Sytze van der Zee, "Roversnest Suriname," *Zaterdag Bijvoegsel, NRC-Handelsblad*, May 11, 1985.

18. The latter reportedly drove a Mercedes of a prominent greengrocer who was arrested in March 1984 in connection with yet another alleged coup attempt. *Weekkrant Suriname*, May 5 and 19, 1984.

19. *Ibid.*, Jan. 28, 1984; and Rekenkamer van Suriname, *Verslag 1980-1987*, 77.

20. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Mar. 6, 1985.
21. *Ibid.*, Nov. 28, 1985.
22. For public sentiment regarding the Bouterse regime, see the survey research reported in *Weekkrant Suriname*, Nov. 30, 1985.
23. Gary Brana-Shute, "Back to the Barracks? Five Years 'Revo' in Suriname," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, 28, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 108.
24. The *Topberaad* merely formalized the membership of the *denkgroep*, Bouterse's inner circle.
25. The Suriname National Accord, 23 November 1985, is reprinted in Abraham F. Lowenthal, ed., *Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record*, vol. 5: 1985-86 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988), C181-82.
26. Evert Azimullah, *Jagernath Lachmon: Een politieke biografie* (Paramaribo: Vaco, 1987), 242-43.
27. *NRC-Handelsblad*, May 25, 1985.
28. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1985.
29. *Weekkrant Suriname*, Oct. 5, 1985.
30. Brana-Shute, "Back to the Barracks?" 105.
31. Reprinted in *Weekkrant Suriname*, July 20, 1985.
32. Van der Zee, "Roversnest Suriname."
33. Naushad Boedhoe, "De verloedering van Suriname," *Intermediair* 21, no. 12 (Mar. 22, 1985): 51. Solitary incidents had a way of dramatizing and even exaggerating the situation. A case in point was the odyssey of Redgan van Sauers, a Surinamese student who had been writing "inflammatory" antimilitary materials. Arrested by the military police, he escaped; but after he had landed back in military custody because of Dutch ineptitude in getting him out of their embassy (and the country), the Dutch government (and press) loudly protested. Bouterse released him, claiming, "This is just another proof that we live under the rule of law." Sauers languished in Suriname, waiting in vain for a Dutch visa. He was subsequently arrested in England and threatened with deportation to Suriname. After considerable bureaucratic confusion, the Dutch finally extended Van Sauers a study visa.
34. *Om Hoog*, Aug. 25, 1985.

35. The military's own in-house newspaper, *Makandra*, discussed the negative feelings of the troops toward the two men. Reported in *De Ware Tijd*, Aug. 12, 1986.

36. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Feb. 25, 1986.

37. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1986.

38. *Ibid.*, Dec. 9, 1985.

## 6

# The Jungle Commando

The holy duty of revenge falls on these [Bush Negro] families. The spirits of those killed are furies (*koenoe*), who will not only haunt and punish their enemies but also any relatives who seek to avoid their duty to avenge them. For the Bush Negroes there is no way back. The war must go on.

H.U.E. Thoden van Velzen

By the summer of 1986, Suriname's society was rapidly becoming unraveled economically and politically. Even as the leaders of the old political parties hammered out their understanding with the *Bevel*, Suriname's six-year-old revolution became more confused—and bloody—than ever.

According to the political accord of November 1985, Bouterse had agreed to a timetable by which the National Assembly would draft a new constitution. Hearings would be held in which submissions would be encouraged from members of the society. A committee of the National Assembly would then draft its recommendations for a constitutional framework by the end of 1985, and the Assembly itself, in coordination with the *Topberaad*, would work out the details. In March 1987, the new constitution would be presented to the people for their scrutiny, and in September they would vote on it in a national referendum. Finally, "no later than April 1, 1988," Bouterse promised general elections.

Also, under terms of the accord, leaders of the three principal parties had joined the *Topberaad*: Jaggernath Lachmon and Alwin Mungra of the VHP,

Henck Arron and Rufus Nooitmeer of the NPS, and Willy Soemita of the KTPI. Holding the key to restoration of Dutch development aid, their support for a return to Western-style democracy was a bitter pill for the radicals around Bouterse. Interviews with members of the old parties also indicate that Bouterse was encouraged to believe that he personally might do rather well in real elections.

Bit by bit, then, with help from the labor and business representatives in the National Assembly, the parties stripped away some of the more offensive proposals of the constitutional guidelines, such as inflammatory references to the colonial and "neocolonial" past, and attempts to institute state control over the media. At the beginning of July 1986, Henck Arron joined Bouterse in the three-man inner circle of the *Topberaad*, ending his banishment in the company of the man who had ousted him.

Two weeks later, Pertab Radhakishun, a VHP leader in the transition team within the *Topberaad*, was named Prime Minister in a Cabinet that included representatives of each of the three parties. With a term slated to end in eight months (March 1987), Radhakishun concentrated his attention on the collapsing economy, seeking to fight corruption and restore a measure of solvency. Among his first actions was to seek a meeting with the Dutch Foreign Minister, Hans van den Broek, to work out a "friendship plan" leading to the restoration of financial aid and technical assistance.

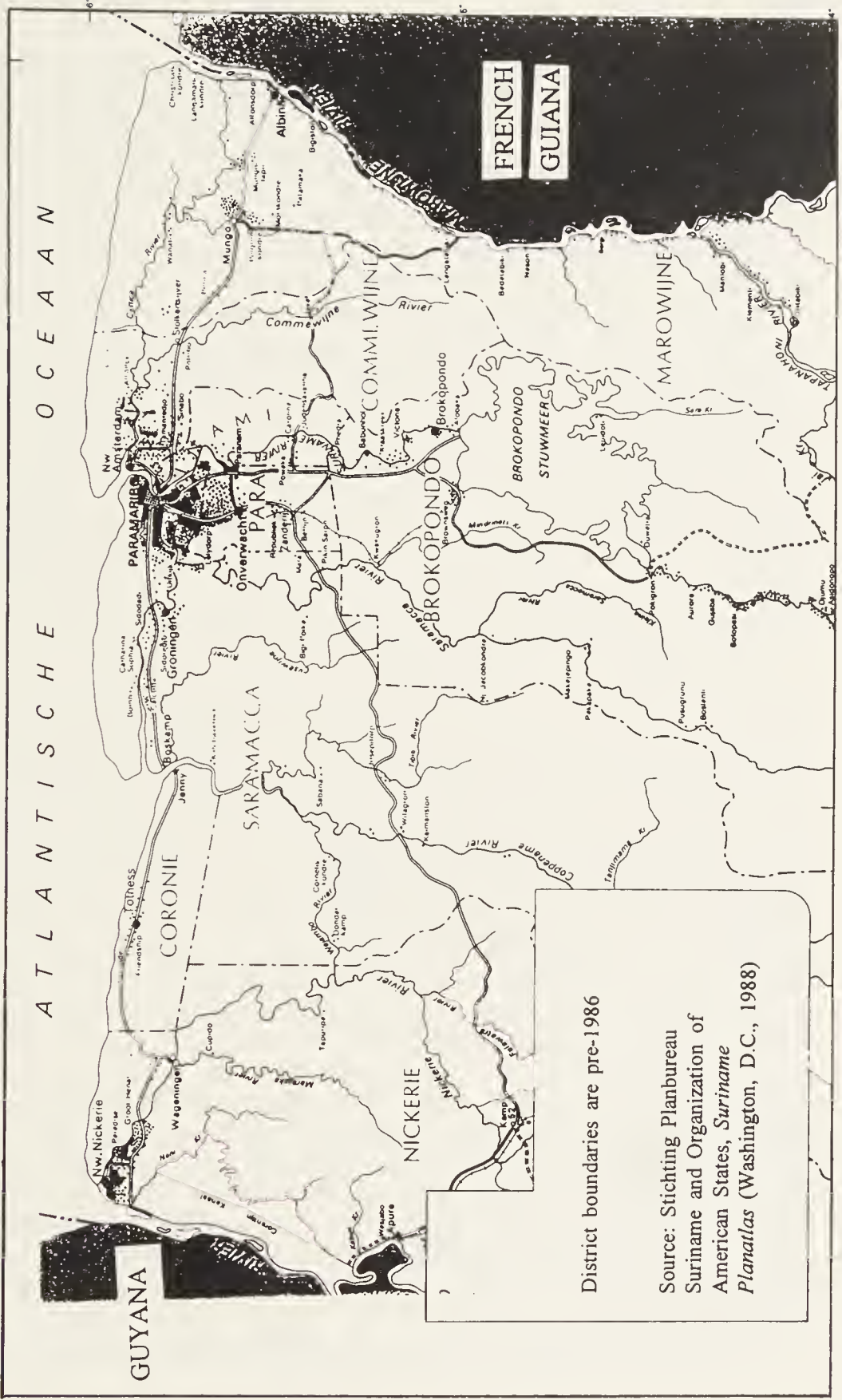
## RONNIE BRUNSWIJK AND THE LIBERATION ARMY

If a very bad situation was slightly on the mend, it took a totally unexpected turn for the worse the same month. A guerrilla band operating in the jungle area southeast of Paramaribo declared its intention to liberate Suriname from military rule and launched a campaign that reminded many of the earlier slave revolts and Maroon wars of the Dutch colonial period. The conflict remained unresolved for over five years—a matter of surprise for everyone, including Bouterse's bitterest enemies.

The war was launched by Ronnie Brunswijk, a member of Bouterse's personal bodyguard. Brunswijk was a Bush Negro, and the great majority of those who gathered around him in the Surinamese Liberation Army (subsequently called the Jungle Commando) were also Bush Negroes. Suriname's 60,000-plus Bush Negroes (now roughly 15 percent of the country's population) are descendants of Maroons who fought for their freedom from slavery against armies of the Dutch and other mercenary forces in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, winning control over much of Suriname's vast interior in the process.<sup>1</sup> [See map]

Bush Negro attitudes toward the authorities in Paramaribo have been ambiguous. On the one hand, the Bush Negro realm—divided among five

COAST VS INTERIOR IN SURINAME IN THE 1980s



District boundaries are pre-1986

Source: Stichting Planbureau  
Suriname and Organization of  
American States, *Suriname  
Planatlas* (Washington, D.C., 1988)

tribal groups and organized along traditional lines—was at least nominally independent. Relations between the tribes and with the coastal society werethus akin to those among sovereign nations, with careful diplomacy and circumspection regarding each other's internal affairs.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Bush Negroes and coastal peoples traveled relatively freely within each other's realms, and in the twenty years since the construction of the Afobaka Dam, Bush Negroes had become an important segment of the labor force at Suralco and Billiton, as well as in the greater Paramaribo area.

Urbanized Bush Negroes became a minor force in national politics in the late 1960s, as new electoral districts were created to facilitate their participation. The NPS organized a special Bush Negro section within its ranks, and a Bush Negro was elected to Parliament in 1967, and again in 1969. Two Bush Negro political parties were subsequently set up, and in 1973 one of these was able to send a member to Parliament as part of an alliance with the Hindustani VHP. Chiefs of the Bush Negro tribes frowned upon such political participation, however, and sought to maintain group identity through traditional structures and relationships. *Kroetoets* (formal meetings) between the tribal *granmans* (chiefs) and coastal leaders took place on a regular basis, and the government in Paramaribo paid the tribal officials regular salaries as tribute, in continuing practices begun centuries before.

Still, there were growing strains in the relations between the Bush Negroes and the Creoles on the coast. The ethnic difference between these two black groups was wide, as Bush Negroes were viewed as half-naked primitives (albeit with certain supernatural powers), while the city Creoles were seen as shamelessly decultured. The opportunity for discrimination or friction between these groups was limited until Bush Negroes began their gradual drift cityward in the 1960s. Although the NPS made some effort to bridge the gap, ethnic tension between Creoles and Bush Negroes became an ongoing problem at the Suralco and Billiton operations, and incidents of a similar origin have occurred from time to time in the city itself. Nevertheless, a push/pull combination of economic adversity, population pressure, and urban attractiveness kept the migration going, and slum encampments of Bush Negroes developed throughout the urban area and its outskirts.

Desi Bouterse seemed to go out of his way to do something for this group—at least in order to utilize them as part of his effort to develop a power base. Bush Negroes were provided public employment in a variety of capacities—hundreds from the Djuka nation taken into the armed forces alone. Because of their skills in survival techniques, Bush Negroes were especially valued, and Bouterse saw to it that they comprised a majority of his bodyguards. Thus it is rather puzzling that this smallest of Suriname's four principal ethnic groups in Suriname should have declared war on its benefactor.

Initially, the principal group identified with Brunswijk's uprising was the

Aukaner (Djuka) tribe, whose settlements were along the upper reaches of the Marowijne River and its confluent, the Tapanahoni River, in eastern Suriname. Djukas had also settled near the border town of Albina on the lower Marowijne, across from French Guiana, and had also built villages near the bauxite mining town of Moengo along the Cottica River west of Albina.

The catalyst may have been as accidental as that for the military coup. According to most accounts, Ronnie Brunswijk had been discharged from Bouterse's bodyguard earlier in the year in a dispute over pay. In June he traveled to The Netherlands on a false passport, allegedly provided by two Dutch newsmen (who later were briefly arrested). On his return, he carried out several explicitly politicomilitary actions, including assaults against police posts in the Albina area. In retaliation, Bouterse's troops swept through a number of Bush Negro villages, looking for the "terrorists." The military's heavy-handed approach helped affirm Brunswijk's image as a Robin Hood-turned-revolutionary, and his following grew into a "liberation army" of around 300 men by the end of 1986. Whatever his efforts to cultivate the favor of Bush Negroes, Bouterse had clearly failed to do enough.

In the summer of 1986, despite an order for his arrest, Brunswijk was able to move freely throughout this region, recruiting his forces. On July 23, his men overran a military base at Stolkertsijver (at the crossing of the east-west highway over the Commewijne River between Paramaribo and Moengo) and captured twelve members of the National Army. A similar attack on the military base at Albina was beaten off.

In a fairly comical, but not necessarily unrelated, incident at about the same time, a group of fourteen rustic "soldiers of fortune" were arrested on July 28 by American FBI agents in Hammond, Louisiana. Recruited by a Surinamese restaurateur in The Netherlands, they had posed as businessmen (their attache cases and other luggage filled with weapons). Somehow believing that the authorities would receive them as bearers of much-needed capital, they planned to take Prime Minister Pertab Radhakishun, Bouterse, and the president of the Central Bank captive.<sup>3</sup> Although their gambit was laughably organized, it permitted Bouterse to depict Brunswijk as being in the service of foreign interests and dependent upon mercenaries.

Bouterse then quickly took the offensive. On August 2, the National Army tried to capture Brunswijk's band in the village of Morakondre, near Albina. They later announced the capture of twenty rebels and the accidental death of a child. Whether the baby's death was accidental or the captives were really rebels is disputed. At any rate, the latter were taken to Paramaribo (in their underwear and with sacks over their heads) for questioning and a possible trade for the army prisoners. Brunswijk and his troops got away.

Following this event, Bouterse sent his best force, the Echo Company, in pursuit of the guerrillas. In the vicinity of Bigiston (a joint Amerindian and Bush Negro village upriver from Albina) another skirmish took place. This

time, the guerrillas were victorious, sinking three dugout canoes full of ammunition and killing four soldiers, wounding five, and capturing three, including the company's commander, Sergeant-Major Henk van Randwijk. Rumors about desertions, insubordination, and supernatural forces working on behalf of the guerrillas began to swirl about Paramaribo.

### THE ROLE OF *WINTI*

Dr. Eddy Jozefzoon, a Bush Negro professor of education in The Netherlands, energetically threw himself into the struggle as the guerrillas' spokesman. He was not about to dispel the belief in supernatural influences in the jungle. As he told *NRC-Handelsblad* editor Frans van Klaveren, Brunswijk "has undoubtedly consulted with a number of *obiamans* (spirit priests)....After determining whether Brunswijk is acting in the general interest, they will have supplied him with the means to strengthen him in his struggle."<sup>4</sup> According to Jozefzoon, Bouterse had undoubtedly visited an *obiaman* and was believed by his followers to enjoy the blessing of Suriname's *winti* (spirits). Thus the struggle of the two men was viewed by many as governed by these forces, which had the ability to exact revenge for previous wrongs and to grant rewards for earlier favors. Brunswijk's early successes signaled invincibility—at least in the jungle; and desertions from the National Army began to rise because of the urban Creoles' respect for *winti* and the *obiaman*. One showdown of sorts took place in March 1987 when guerrillas defeated a special unit of the National Army commanded by Ewout Leeftland, who, like Bouterse, was part Creole and part Amerindian. Although thought to be protected by the even stronger spirits of the Amerindians, Leeftland was killed in the incident.

Because Paramaribo is permeated with *winti*, [commented Jozefzoon] it isn't easy for Bouterse's boys to step into the forest, knowing that it's manipulated by the *obiaman*. And if the leaders should decide to send exclusively Javanese and Hindustani youths there, the army would be torn apart: "Why do you shove the dirty work onto us?," they'll say.<sup>5</sup>

More than the *obiamans* were ready to cast their lot with Brunswijk, it seemed. On September 2, a *kroetoe* was held in Dritabiki of chiefs and representatives of all the Bush Negro tribes—Djuka, Paramaka, Saramaka, Matawai, and Aluku. They agreed to sever their ties with Paramaribo, form an alliance, and name Brunswijk their military commander. Bouterse responded by cutting off all financial payments to the tribes, one of which (the Matawais of west-central Suriname) subsequently withdrew from the alliance. But adherence of the Saramaka tribe (Suriname's largest next to the Djukas) constituted a major gain for the guerrillas. The Saramakaners populated the

south-central region, with settlements along the Suriname River above the Afobaka Dam. This opened a potential second front against the regime.

On August 30, Brunswijk's forces captured the police post at Stoelman's Island on the upper Marowijne, near the confluence of the Tapanahoni and Marowijne, taking control of the airstrip there. A few days later, Bouterse's limited ability to fight in the interior was further demonstrated when a helicopter rented by Suriname's National Army from Brazil (for \$26,000 a day) was downed by the guerrillas. Bouterse fought back along the coast, shelling Albina and the Bush Negro villages nearby, demanding joint French-Surinamese patrols along the Marowijne, and "bombing" the Paramaka capital of Langatabiki with grenades thrown from Defender aircraft.

But by October, Brunswijk's men held four airstrips, had shot down a Defender, and had commandeered a private Cessna and a Surinamese Airlines passenger plane (complete with tourists). The leader of the latter exploit was the former head of Echo Company, Henk van Randwijk, now enlisted in Brunswijk's struggle. More alarming was the site of the plane hijacking: Raleigh Falls, on the western side of the Afobaka Dam. The airfield at Zanderij, about halfway between the dam and Paramaribo, was now at risk, and all night flights (customary for international arrivals) were canceled. Other raids were reported near Carolina, forty kilometers east of Zanderij, and at the site of the national palm oil factory near Patamakasteek, south of Moengo.

Bouterse's Foreign Minister, Henk Herrenberg, called for distribution of arms among the population to guard against sabotage of energy, water, and other installations, as well as the country's agricultural and mining enterprises. The *Topberaad* rejected the idea, though they seemed to agree with Herrenberg in criticizing The Netherlands and other foreign powers for trying "to set the people of the interior against those of the city, and the people in general against the army."<sup>6</sup> Rumors now began to circulate about night flights into Zanderij that brought Russian weapons and Libyan advisers.<sup>7</sup> Mercenary soldiers were said to be coming from such unlikely locations as Honduras and Portuguese-speaking Africa.

## THE WAR AGAINST SURALCO

The worst was yet to come. In the picturesque border town of Albina, on the Marowijne River across from French Guiana, firefights had destroyed many buildings early in September, and its 1,500 inhabitants were forced to evacuate. In early November, the Jungle Commando moved westward across the interior, temporarily seizing Brownsveg, a military post near the Afobaka Dam. They returned later in the month to knock out power lines between the dam and Paramaribo. At the same time, other units laid siege to Moengo, burning down the police station and making off with a large quantity of

dynamite. On the eve of Alcoa's seventieth anniversary of operations in Suriname, Suralco ordered its Moengo operations closed and the workers evacuated because of continuing conflict around the town. Bouterse retaliated by arresting August Meijer, Suralco's director, on charges of giving stores of dynamite to the guerrillas. Meijer claimed he had acted under duress and was released a few days later.

In January 1987, sabotage once again knocked out the electricity supply to Suralco's aluminum smelter in Paranam, affecting 700 workers and cutting back electricity for Paramaribo. A few days later, angered that they were arbitrarily being made to suffer by the rebels' action, some thirty workers in the aluminum smelter smashed the computer equipment at the company's aluminum oxide smelter, forcing Suralco's management to send yet another 2,000 workers home. A number of workers were arrested, but there was no proof that they had carried out their action in collaboration with the guerrillas. The damage was not repaired until mid-March, whereupon Suralco put the aluminum oxide smelter back in operation, leaving the smelter for aluminum idle.

There was no denying the increased harassment of Bush Negroes in Paramaribo and in the outlying areas. A tent prison was set up for 300 Bush Negroes arrested on suspicion of aiding the Brunswijk forces. This spurred the further flight of Bush Negroes to the interior or to the sanctuary of French Guiana. By October, many in the Bush Negro work force at Suralco's Paranam facilities had fled, complicating operations there even before the incidents of sabotage.

In December, hundreds of freshly dug, unmarked graves were discovered in an abandoned graveyard in Paramaribo. Who the victims were was uncertain. As in all wars, each side reported heavy losses for their enemy and negligible ones for themselves. But whatever the figures, whole wards of the city's hospitals were closed to public access, an emergency hospital was set up in the Memre Boekoe Barracks, the mortuary of the Academic Hospital was sealed, and another was set up at the Zanderij airbase. Some of the victims might have been army mutineers, for 28 soldiers were reportedly arrested at Zanderij in October, and another 123 were said to have deserted. Parents of soldiers were justifiably alarmed at these developments and the accompanying press blackout. That same month, Bouterse had decreed a flogging and two days in jail for anyone talking in public about Ronnie Brunswijk. Public figures known to harbor anti-Bouterse feelings were told to report periodically to the authorities.

## GENOCIDE?

At 1 A.M., November 30, the National Army attacked the Bush Negro

village of Mooi Wana, in what Thoden van Velzen calls "the My Lai of Suriname." Thinking the Jungle Commando was (or had been) sleeping there, the army killed nineteen civilians (mostly women and children). Showing that their mission was punitive as well as tactical, they then proceeded to Brunswijk's home village of Moengo Tapoe, where they killed most of his family.

As these incidents were publicized, with photos of bodies making the front pages of Dutch newspapers, an enormous outcry was raised. In September 1986 the United Nations Commission for Human Rights had called upon Suriname to permit a team to investigate reports of the torture of Bush Negroes held for questioning. By December 1986, according to a Dutch communication to the U.N. Secretary-General, government troops, military police, and people's militias had been responsible for an estimated 200 civilian deaths in Suriname. Amnesty International put the figure of Bush Negro deaths alone at 250.<sup>8</sup>

At year's end a National Army plane attacked a bus filled with children on its way to refuge in French Guiana. This may have been incidental to the reenergized use of air power on more stationary targets, for rocket-firing Alouette helicopters once again attacked the Paramaka capital of Langatabiki on December 5, and a number of Bush Negro villages along the Cottica River (in the Moengo area) shortly thereafter. In March 1987, the 6,500 residents (mostly Bush Negro) of Brownsweg, near the Afobaka Dam, were forcibly evacuated to Paramaribo "for their own safety." Accounts conflicted regarding military incidents near Brownsweg, but there was no doubting the town's strategic location for guerrillas and army alike.

Meanwhile, a mass emigration out of the affected zones to French Guiana began. By December, an estimated 5,000 Surinamers, mostly Bush Negroes, were crowding into French Guiana's own tent camps to escape the war. This figure swelled to 7,600 in April 1987. "Bouterse is not good for Suriname," Canadian reporter George Tombs was told by a Djuka refugee in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni. "He is a Devil. He fights the Blacks; he kills the Blacks."<sup>9</sup>

## AN EMBOLDENED OPPOSITION

In November, Finance Minister Soebhaas Mungra announced that new banknotes would be issued to deprive the guerrillas of any use of their Surinamese guilders. While the Liberation Army allegedly had some reserves of gold from Bush Negro prospecting in the interior, there were also many Surinamese guilders donated by the expatriate community in The Netherlands and the United States. These would no longer be convertible or usable.

On the eve of the seventh anniversary of the military coup in 1980,

secondary-school students began a general strike. Anti-Bouterse demonstrations on February 17, 18, and 19 drew from 2,000 to 5,000 into the streets. The regime's goal of political education had clearly failed. "Bouterse—seven years, nothing done; now it's time that he be gone," they chanted, and "No bread; no school!" Joining them were Suralco workers, angry at the war's disruption of their jobs. Bouterse tried to cool things down by promising that the constitutional referendum would be no later than September. However, the patience of the authorities with "all anti-national forces" was at an end, he warned.<sup>10</sup> On February 20, military and regular police shocked the country by pursuing student demonstrators into their schools, beating a number of them. This produced a widespread public outcry, and schools were closed for an indefinite period. Amid uncertainty about his ability to control crowds in the capital, Bouterse decided to celebrate the coup's February 25 anniversary in Nieuw Nickerie, on the border with Guyana.

Demands for Bouterse's resignation continued, however. An effort to reopen schools in April led to closure of seven of the eleven high schools after protest assemblies were held at some of them. As Hans Buddingh' reported, anti-government protests came from schools in some of the poorest areas of Paramaribo, areas where Bouterse may well have expected his greatest support. Under the slogan "Give us a future," thousands of students refused to continue their studies.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

In this volatile atmosphere of domestic unrest and guerrilla warfare, talks proceeded over a new constitution. Late in January 1987, the *Topberaad* announced a tentative accord "in principle" on the structure of the new government. In this design the National Assembly was to be a single-chamber body with eighty to ninety members (quite an increase from the present thirty-one-seat body, or even the earlier thirty-nine-seat Parliament!). By a two-thirds vote, it would choose a new President. The President would have full executive powers, but his Cabinet would be picked in consultation with the National Assembly, the latter having the power to oust both the President and his Cabinet (presumably by the same two-thirds vote). To permit the parties to announce and explain the new model to their followers, Bouterse lifted a seven-year-old ban on party meetings February 1.

But everything was freshly thrown into doubt two weeks later, on February 12, when the Radhakishun government resigned. Rumors of disarray and dissatisfaction had already been heard in October. The principal tension seemed to exist between the NPS and VHP members in the Cabinet, on the one hand, and those representing Bouterse's 25 February Movement, on the other. Chief among the latter was Foreign Minister Henk Herrenberg, who

was constantly attacked for his excessive travel and flamboyant nationalism. Bouterse's Machiavellian skills were shown here by playing Herrenberg off against Henk Heidweiller, his personal *chef du cabinet*. Heidweiller, formerly a member of one of the smaller "old parties" (the Christian Democratic PSV), had entered the Dutch foreign service and served at the United Nations and in Washington under both The Netherlands and Suriname. Like Herrenberg, he had also been Suriname's ambassador in The Hague. Heidweiller's role in recent years had been to follow along after Herrenberg, smoothing things out.

As the latest crisis came to a head in January and February 1987, the old party men, rallying behind Heidweiller, demanded Herrenberg's ouster. Herrenberg's allies in the VFB, in turn, demanded that Radhakishun go as well. Tit for tat. Ever the balancer, Bouterse approved the double deal. But as Radhakishun went, so went all the other "old party" ministers. One of Bouterse's VFB leaders, Jules Wijdenbosch (Minister of Internal Affairs and Vice Premier under Radhakishun), stepped in as interim Prime Minister until a new Cabinet could be installed. Clearly, a new power play was about to begin: Could Bouterse keep the old parties in the fold? What would their price be? The student strike—and the military's violent reaction—did not augur well.

March 31, the constitutional deadline, was close at hand, and this was clearly in the thinking of everyone. Postponing the selection of a Cabinet, Bouterse concentrated on the struggle within the *Topberaad*, where all the top figures of the political Left and Right were represented. In mid-March, with many details yet to be worked out, some decisions were announced: the National Assembly would consist of fifty-one members elected on a district basis by proportional representation from party lists. Regional and district councils would be elected by the same system. Executive power would be held by a President chosen by two-thirds of the National Assembly. Both President and Assembly would have five-year terms. Stalemate in the Assembly would be settled, if need be, by a simple majority of members of all legislative assemblies in the country (regional, district, and national) convened in a United People's Assembly.

Although winning the right to free and open elections to the new legislature, the old parties still expressed their concern over the powers of the presidency and the armed forces. A State Council (*Staatsraad*), modeled on the *Topberaad*, gave functional representation to the armed forces as well as to unions, employer organizations, and the National Assembly's principal parties. A watchdog body, the State Council could dissolve the Assembly and suspend laws that were in conflict with the constitution, the government's program, or "the national interest"—a dangerously vague mandate, as the old parties saw it. Even more ill-defined was its power to call for "general mobilization whenever the national interest requires," conceivably through participation in "people's militia-type structures," which the draft constitution

explicitly legitimized. This, too, was a matter of concern for the old party members, and they continued to press for the removal of such language. In a closed meeting of the *Topberaad* on March 28 and 29, the old parties got their way on this latter issue.

As unflappable as ever, Bouterse went on television to announce the draft agreement. He then seemed to take Lachmon and Arron, sitting nearby, by surprise, declaring that the referendum on the constitution would be held September 30. If the Constitution was approved, national elections would follow promptly on Independence Day, November 25 (a full six months earlier than promised in 1984).

### EXILE POLITICS AS A MIRROR

Not surprisingly, Surinamers in exile were, if anything, more skeptical of these events than their compatriots in Suriname. While Creoles were the most common emigrants to The Netherlands before the 1970s, they traditionally had been pulled rather than pushed to their motherland, with students usually the only ones likely to return. When fear for the future began to send ill-prepared Hindustanis and Javanese (some directly from rural areas) to The Netherlands in the 1970s, the Surinamese exile community began to mirror the one at home in both socioeconomic and ethnic complexity. Finally, when the zigzag politics of the Bouterse years sent tens of thousands more abroad, including many who had initially supported the revolution, the ideological pluralism also began to reflect that in Suriname.

A number of resistance movements came into being—with only tenuous cooperation among them. These included the *Amsterdamse Volksverzet* (led by former Vice Premier Andre Haakmat), the *Bevrijdingsraad Suriname* (presided over until March 1986 by former President Henk Chin A Sen, thereafter by Glenn Tjon Akiët), and the *Pendawalima* (led by the Javanese former MP Salim Somohardjo and a former Prime Minister and president of the National Bank, Jules Sedney). Former Parliament Speaker Emile Wijntuin operated a resistance group of his own in Venezuela and Curacao with support from the Venezuelan Christian Democrats. To lobby for support for the Liberation Army from the United States and the Organization of American States, Henk Chin A Sen announced in March 1987 that he was setting up an office in Washington.

Bouterse had his own supporters in the motherland, however. The *Liga van Patriotten* (led by Ludwig van Mulier) managed to provide counter-demonstrators at most of the activities of the other groups. In the event of a Dutch invasion of Suriname (or even open support for the rebels), *Liga* members threatened violent reprisals. In the meantime, they beat the brother of *Pendawalima* leader Somohardjo (a case of mistaken identity) and are

generally believed responsible for the shooting of three Dutch rock musicians in June 1985. (The killers apparently mistook the apartment in which the musicians were rehearsing for the headquarters of the *Bevrijdingsraad*, which was one floor above it.<sup>11</sup>)

## SURINAME AS AN INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM

Ever since December 1982, when the Dutch cut off development assistance, Bouterse, Herrenberg, and Heidweiller had tried their hands at coaxing (or bullying) a resumption of the aid flow. The Dutch continued to insist upon the restoration of constitutional government, elections, and the protection of human rights. A strict accounting for the December murders was dropped from this list of conditions, but it was unlikely that the Dutch would do more than talk about aid projects before the redemocratization process was completed. The only exception to this was the modest humanitarian assistance that began in the fall of 1986. Small grants were made from the Dutch Embassy in 1985, and the Dutch were preparing to supply medical aid to the Surinamese Ministry of Health when the Boerenveen case sidetracked the effort. However, as civil war sent shockwaves through an already battered society, the Dutch relented and began to provide relief to both Paramaribo and the refugees in French Guiana. At the September 1986 meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Harare, Zimbabwe, Herrenberg called for a condemnation of The Netherlands, accusing it of backing the Brunswijk invasion and of using Radio Nederland for agitation just at the moment when the idea of a people's democracy was rooting itself in the public's mind. As in previous meetings, energetic Dutch diplomacy blocked a strongly worded resolution on Suriname's behalf.

In October, at the United Nations, Bouterse described his country's government as nondictatorial and law-abiding. To the press, he described Brunswijk as a "pebble in my shoe." He was grateful, he said, that the U.S. government did not view the Boerenveen affair as indicative of his own government's attitude about drugs. But the Mooi Wana case in December produced strong expressions of concern at the United Nations and in Washington about the military's treatment of the Bush Negroes.

Perhaps the most worrisome—and heatedly disputed—news involved reports about Libyans. In August 1986, *NRC-Handelsblad* reported that ninety-three Libyans had taken Surinamese citizenship (i.e., held Surinamese passports). In October, it reported that a shipment of 100 rockets had arrived, together with fifty to sixty Libyan instructors.<sup>12</sup> Herrenberg denied such reports, saying there were only a dozen or so Libyans in the country. For the French, with their ongoing struggle in Chad and their space research base in Kourou, French Guiana, 100 miles from the border with Suriname, the wildly

varying estimates of a Libyan presence in Suriname were unsettling. The U.S. Department of State repeatedly discounted the higher figures bandied in the press, but warned nations against supplying weapons to either the Surinamese government or the rebels.

Reports about the Libyans persisted, however. After some accounts placed "strange-speaking" foreigners among the soldiers involved in the Mooi Wana and Moengo Tapoe killings in December, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz expressed "great concern" about the fighting, and Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams told former Prime Minister Wim Udenhout (now Surinamese Ambassador in Washington) that Libyan military assistance produced a negative impression in Washington regarding everything else Suriname was doing.<sup>13</sup> Thereafter, it was reported that Libyans were flying out of Suriname at a rate of six or seven a day.<sup>14</sup> Several years after these occurrences, I found no one in public life who believed that there had ever been more than a dozen or so Libyans in Suriname. Those who had been there had mostly been involved in cultural and religious activities. The capacity for Surinamers to become spooked by rumors of this sort was simply testimony to the fear-ridden political atmosphere that existed.

Meanwhile, clearly affected by the currency reform, Brunswijk's supporters were forced to buy their weapons on the Brazilian black market with gold. It is unclear whether the Brazilian authorities honored the United States request against arms sales at this point, but arms seemed to flow to both sides from dealers in the Amazon region. France assured Suriname that it had no intention of interfering in the affair, and the French Guianese Prefect, Jacques Dewatre, invited Surinamese officials to investigate the refugee camps.

The severe criticism by The Netherlands of the Bush Negro killings brought Dutch-Surinamese relations to a new flash point. Foreign Minister Herrenberg demanded that Bouterse break relations with The Hague over its interference in Suriname's internal affairs. Yet "irresponsible talk" of massive new human rights violations and even genocide prompted Bouterse to lift a ban on Dutch journalists. (This, too, sparked some criticism. A group of Dutch reporters immediately arrived and fanned out across Paramaribo and its outskirts. However, as they were boarding a flight back to Amsterdam, military police confiscated most of their film and audiotapes.)

Renewed Dutch governmental criticism provoked angry demands by Bouterse and Herrenberg that The Netherlands recall its Ambassador, Dirk Jan van Houten. The Surinamese had earlier recalled their ambassador in The Hague, expecting the Dutch to reciprocate, as diplomatic practice would dictate; but the Dutch refused. Now that the demand was more explicit, there was little the Dutch could do: they announced Van Houten's withdrawal on January 12, 1987. Heidweiller, who had once served as Van Houten's superior in the Dutch U.N. mission, said the decision in the *Topberaad* had been unanimous. But this clearly was not the case, for the struggle to oust

Herrenberg only intensified among the old party members. Within two months of Van Houten's recall, Heidweiller, having replaced Herrenberg as Foreign Minister, was avidly courting the Dutch government, trying to get the ambassador back in his post. Once again, the Dutch took their time.

## ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

If Suriname's growing isolation could be viewed as autonomy and its falling reserves as the key to self-reliance, there was little celebration—even among the leftist economists of Anton de Kom University. They alternately courted and attacked The Netherlands at every opportunity, at home or abroad. While economic growth was not at a standstill—as witnessed by the availability of domestic staples and the growth of some small-scale industry, it *was* declining overall. According to a May 1986 report of the International Monetary Fund, export earnings had declined 10 percent in 1985, and national income was down 4 percent. Backup support for industrial development was limited by the country's scarce foreign exchange. Only six of ten generators in the state-run power station were operative, due to shortage of spare parts, and manufacturers that needed certain raw materials from abroad were forced to contrive alternatives or face bankruptcy.

Despite a steady emigration stream, unemployment continued to rise, the official figure in 1987 topping 30% for the first time. Government austerity (urged by the IMF) was never seriously contemplated, given these conditions. Surinamese economist Henk Chin asserts that Sf 1.5 billion in currency had been printed in the preceding four years without any corresponding growth in national production.<sup>15</sup> If inflation officially was reported at only 10.9 percent in 1985, the discrepancy could be explained by massive shipments of foodstuffs and cash remittances supplied by relatives in The Netherlands, together with state-decreed price controls on basic foodstuffs, and a growing, but unmeasured black market. The combination of shrinking revenues and rising government expenditures produced a sixfold rise in the budget deficit between 1982 and 1986, and foreign exchange reserves, which stood at over \$208 million in the first quarter of 1982, were down to below \$18 million in August 1986.<sup>16</sup>

*Latin American Regional Reports—Caribbean* reported significant growth for 1985 in only two areas: oil (production doubled to 2,000 barrels per day in 1985) and rice (a 20 percent increase, to 150,000 tons, was expected in 1986). Concern still focused principally on bauxite, aluminum oxide, and aluminum, for even with world prices at an all-time low, these remained Suriname's principal exports. Established seventy years earlier, Suriname's bauxite industry had grown to control a quarter of the world market in the 1950s. But discovery and exploitation of new and cheaper sources in Australia

and Brazil reduced Suriname's share from 10 percent in 1974 to 3 percent in 1984; and the proportion of the government's budget derived from bauxite-related revenues was down from 25 percent to 10 percent.<sup>17</sup>

Both Billiton and Suralco sought to rationalize production with layoffs. Charles Fletcher, president of Alcoa, flew to Paramaribo in August 1986 to negotiate personally with Bouterse. A promise to invest \$150 million over the next five years served to assure his company twenty more years of bauxite production. Fletcher also met union demands for certain severance benefits, including paying the company housing mortgages for the laid-off workers. Billiton made similar pledges of reinvestment in exchange for desired layoffs. Down 1,600 over a three-year period, the combined surviving work force of 5,000 may have been thankful that rumors of a total industrial closure had been scuttled. But the threat of closure was kept alive by the ongoing guerrilla warfare.

## CONFUSION, CORRUPTION, AND ALIENATION

Quite apart from anything else [reported the London-based *Latin American Times* in early 1987], economic policy is in a total shambles. All kinds of rulings and regulations appear and disappear overnight concerning import and export policy, the remission of earnings abroad, nationalisation, labour policy, taxation, the use of foreign currency bank accounts, and related issues. Paperwork governing investment and other matters must be processed through Centrum INDEX, an agency of the Ministry of Transport, Trade and Industry, which seems to have no coherent policies and indulges in ad hoc negotiation on an individual case-by-case basis.<sup>18</sup>

The shambles in international economic transactions was more than matched by the chaos of the domestic black market, unrestrained by governmental interference. However far the U.S. dollar may have fallen in world markets, the Surinamese guilder (Sf) had fallen nearly seven times farther by 1987. Its fix to the dollar at US\$1.0=Sf 1.775 was a formality beneficial to the bauxite unions and the government, though one opposed by the companies as keeping their operating costs unduly high. As Hans Buddingh' reported, it was hard to keep one's head above water with the inflated prices:

Not so long ago, a kilo of sugar merely cost [Sf] 75 cents. Now it costs 7.50. A liter of cooking oil goes for 25 guilders. A few months ago it was just 2.80. The prices of many other staples are up anywhere from double to five times. After a prolonged wait in line, often the item has just been sold out.<sup>19</sup>

Over the years, Surinamers had become dependent upon imported foodstuffs, regardless of the rich variety of local produce available. As a

consequence, shortages of certain imported staples were the cause of endless complaints. But conditions hit a new low in 1986-87. Cooking oil, margarine, cheese, butter, tea, soap, detergent, toothpaste, toilet paper, and even sugar, coffee, and bread were generally unavailable or hoarded for sale on the black market. In October, two Surinamers were killed in a riot that broke out over the distribution of a shipment of potatoes from The Netherlands. Lack of newsprint forced local papers into temporary closure. *De Ware Tijd*, for example, announced that it would close for an indefinite period in April 1987.

Especially stricken were the hospitals, where X-ray machinery was no longer functional, antibiotics were unavailable, and even tea and aspirin were severely rationed. Limited "humanitarian aid" from The Netherlands was considered "peanuts" in light of these needs. Dutch training and internships had ended with the aid cutoff, and migration had left many areas of health care untended. Surinamers were given a graphic example of the limitations to medical care in January 1986, when fifty-two-year-old George Hindorie, a major figure in Suriname's pre-coup politics, underwent minor surgery, slipped into a coma, and died before the appropriate medicine could be acquired in French Guiana. In April 1987, Suriname's Bureau of Public Health predicted an increase in epidemic diseases, especially in the face of civil warfare in the countryside and large-scale movements of refugees from the interior.

With all the shortages—from consumer goods to medical supplies—it became almost irresistible for many in power to engage in profitable side enterprises. Characteristic were the manipulation of freight prices on the national steamship company, "insider" scalping of tickets for flights out of the country, the alleged smuggling of gold by Minister Imro Fong Poen (Transport, Trade, and Industry), and allegedly irregular bidding practices by the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Eric Tjon Kie Sim) and high officials in the Ministry of Public Works.<sup>20</sup>

In the trial of Etienne Boerenveen and the Suriname Airlines officials in Miami in November 1986, the prosecution produced videotapes of Boerenveen offering the undercover officers 100 hectares of grazing land, complete with dairy that could be used for a cocaine lab. Its location near an airfield made it ideal, he said. He and Bouterse could arrange for imports of ether and other lab supplies and would take care of the police and customs officials. Despite claims from Boerenveen and the Surinamese government that this was all a setup calculated to besmirch the revolution's good name, the three defendants were found guilty, and Boerenveen was sentenced to twelve years in prison.

Six months later, a police station in Meerzorg, across the river from Paramaribo, was destroyed in what government officials called a guerrilla raid. Family members of the dead threw doubt on this, however. The three policemen killed in the attack had been hauled from their beds in the middle of the night by men in a vehicle that was later found near the ferry to Paramaribo. The policemen had recently investigated deadly toxic emissions

in a stream near the Javanese settlement of Tamanredjo and stumbled upon a cocaine lab. All materials from their investigation were destroyed with them.

"With the degeneration of morality and rise in criminality," declared *Kerkbode*, the publication of Suriname's largest Protestant church (the *Evangelische Broedergemeenschap*), "our society has never experienced so much misery as we do at present. The people are bereft of hope and aspirations, our economic situation is deplorable, and our lives victimized by ignorance, dishonesty, and a lack of privacy."<sup>21</sup>

## WAS THERE ANY WAY OUT?

Although many Surinamers talked of boycotting the referendum on the new constitution, or even voting against it, as a protest against the old parties' collaboration with Bouterse, it was hard to conceive of a majority of eligible voters making such a costly gesture. However one appraises their delicate maneuvering in the preceding two or three years, the old parties were seen by most Surinamers as holding their ground. Their leaders stayed in the country. Some were arrested, others tortured, but they stayed, forcing Bouterse to come to them. And in the two and a half years of constitutional negotiations, Bouterse found himself yielding his (and the VFB's) position on almost everything. This implied his recognition of the old parties' power and his ultimate dependence on them for an amnesty, if not his very survival.

Would the military, in fact, return to the barracks, allowing the old parties to return to power? Everyone recognized that a great gamble was involved. Mindful of the range of options suggested by Latin America's southern cone states (blanket amnesty in Uruguay, partial amnesty/partial trial in Argentina, and silent avoidance of the issue in Chile and Brazil), the old parties appeared ready to opt for silent avoidance. But would Brunswijk's guerrillas lay down their arms under these conditions? And what, if anything, could be done to improve relations between the Bush Negro tribes and coastal society?

In May 1987, Bouterse admitted to a Brazilian interviewer that he had taken part in the December 1982 murders. The immediate reaction of party leaders in the Dutch Parliament was to demand Bouterse's prosecution as a condition of restoring Dutch aid. But civil prosecution of Bouterse and the other executioners would precipitate a military reaction that could undo all the reforms. Lachmon, Arron, and the others were forced to choose between half a loaf and none. So, too, were the Dutch.

What would be the effects of such a compromise for the state of Suriname's political culture? Would Suriname's youth extend legitimacy to the new institutions being set up and to the officials soon to head them? Had the old party leaders learned their lesson with regard to the use of ethnicity, favoritism, and corruption as means for political mobilization? Was the

political damage of ideological fratricide also on its way out? What degree of civility could be expected in its place? The situation on the eve of the military coup had not been a healthy one by any means. But if the result of all these efforts was merely to return to the *status quo ante Bouterse*, the accomplishment would be pretty dubious.

## NOTES

1. Wim Hoogbergen, "The History of the Suriname Maroons," in Gary Brana-Shute, ed., *Resistance and Rebellion in Suriname: Old and New*, Studies in Third World Societies, no. 43 (Williamsburg, Va: College of William and Mary, 1990), 65-102.

2. Andre Moses and Ben Scholtens, *Bosnegers en overheid: Ontwikkeling van de politieke verhoudingen, 1650-1988* (Paramaribo: De Ware Tijd, 1988).

3. Nancy Fisher, of the FBI's New Orleans office, commented, "When they were arrested, they were all dressed in suits, because they all wanted to look like bankers when they stepped off the plane....If you'd have seen them, you'd know they weren't used to wearing suits" (*Columbia [Missouri] Daily Tribune*), July 29, 1986). More than likely, the FBI had saved their lives.

4. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Aug. 23, 1986.

5. *Ibid.* An example of the psychosocial effects of belief in *koenoe* (the furies of revenge) is provided by the anthropologist H. U. E. Thoden van Velzen, who studied the origins and course of the guerrilla war:

At the end of 1987, a strange affliction troubled a sergeant of the National Army. It concerned "M" a Maroon who had fought on the side of the National Army in various actions. He was wounded, but even before he had recuperated he announced, to the delight of his superiors, that he would soon be taking up arms again against Brunswijk's terrorists. However, something went wrong in November 1987. Neighbors in Paramaribo divined that "M" was seized by a spirit. Observers agreed that it was a female spirit who spoke a Maroon language. The spirit shouted through the silent night of Paramaribo's middle class suburbia: "They killed me while I was pregnant," followed by a few sentences with atrocious details of the massacre. According to the information I received, "M" is possessed by the spirit of a woman killed at Moi Wana. In "ordinary life" "M" remained an active member of the National Army, proud of his uncompromising attitude towards "Brunswijk's Gang." ...At night time quite a different persona continues to make its appearance in nocturnal Paramaribo. "M," donned [*sic*] in female attire and with a high pitched voice, makes his walks. No shrine is erected for the woman killed at Moi Wana; there is no evidence of any other cultic activities. The agony shown by this sergeant might remain a personal tragedy with few consequences for social relations either between different Maroon groups or within his

own matrilineage. It seems likely that, as a result of this civil war, more avenging spirits will make their appearance in the near future. (H. U. E. Thoden van Velzen, "The Maroon Insurgency: Anthropological Reflections on the Civil War in Suriname," in Brana-Shute, ed., 176)

6. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Sept. 22, 1986.

7. *Ibid.*, Oct. 11 and 13, 1986. A U.S. government spokesperson claimed to have no proof of the Libyan presence but admitted that, if it was true, it would be "a whole new situation." U.S. deference to The Hague regarding Suriname, he suggested, would cease (*Ibid.*, Oct. 17, 1986).

8. *Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1986, Jan. 23, 1987.

9. *Le Devoir* (Montreal), Apr. 28, 1987.

10. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Feb. 21, 1987.

11. *Weekkrant Suriname*, June 1, 1985.

12. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Aug. 15 and Oct. 11, 1986.

13. *Washington Post*, Dec. 17, 1986.

14. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Dec. 23, 1986.

15. *Ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1986.

16. *Latin American Times*, 7, no. 9 (1987): 29.

17. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Dec. 17, 1986.

18. *Latin American Times* 7, no. 9 (1987): 31.

19. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Apr. 22, 1987.

20. *Weekkrant Suriname*, May 10 and June 14, 1986.

21. Quoted in *Weekkrant Suriname*, Aug. 16, 1987.

# 7

## Redemocratization—After a Fashion

I'd rather be a reed (*riethalm*) than a giant cottonwood tree (*kankantrie*), because the storm only makes a reed bend, while it can topple a cottonwood tree.

Jaggernath Lachmon  
April 2, 1987

Optimism about the restoration of democracy in Suriname in 1987 was dangerously widespread. As members of the Presidential Observer Delegation from the United States to witness the first general elections there since 1977, my wife and I witnessed massive caravans of voters in the late afternoon of Election Day. With few exceptions, all waved flags of orange and/or green, the colors of the VHP and NPS, respectively.

Surinamers opposed to the military and its new political party, the *Nationale Democratische Partij* (National Democratic Party, NDP), clearly had a good idea of their numerical strength even before the votes were tallied. Their caravans snaked through all parts of the city, but their noise and enthusiasm seemed to reach their height—and greatest provocative danger—along the Kleine Combeweg, the road that passes Fort Zeelandia and Bouterse's headquarters on the Suriname River. Before any incidents could ensue, Lachmon quickly issued a warning to followers of his *Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling* (Front for Democracy and Development, FDO) to refrain from provocative activity and to limit their celebrations as much as possible.

The situation was probably all the more perilous given the FDO landslide.

Like it or not, the polarization between civilians and military was now greater than it had been in several years. Indeed, it was as bad as it had been in the 1970s when a Creole government faced an embittered Hindustani opposition. Exclusion of the Hindustanis in the scramble to independence and thereafter had been morally illegitimate; in contrast, while the removal of the military from power may have been popular and reasonable, they still had their Uzis and were not so easily outmaneuvered as the Hindustanis had been.

Labor, too, was not going to leave its corporatist power-sharing position (in the *Topberaad* and old Assembly) without a bit of noise. Fred Derby, whose *Surinaamse Partij van de Arbeid* (Surinamese Labor Party, SPA) was shut out completely at the polls, used his position as spokesman for the Surinamese Labor Council (RAVAKSUR) on a number of occasions to demand direct participation in the government. Lachmon and Arron kept both the military and labor away from the inner sanctum of decision-making, stretching the constitution as far as its terms would permit. But the more the FDO's control over the government was enhanced, the more vulnerable it was to military insubordination and hostile labor action.

What is even more puzzling was the FDO's failure to find any areas for decisive policy-making during the first four years of redemocratized government. There were clearly mammoth problems in reaching settlements with the Jungle Commando and The Netherlands—both of whom controlled resources vital for the country's economic reconstruction. But by 1990, I found a level of disappointment and political alienation quite beyond anything I had expected. Suriname had come full circle. With reference to Lachmon's metaphor above, were Suriname's democrats too stooped to conquer? And, if Bouterse was the *kankantrie*, why had his "fall" still left him standing? Juxtaposing the *kankantrie* with the *riethalm* might also have some worrisome implications: With which does one associate honor and upright behavior? selfishness and pride? What values, wanted and unwanted, does "bending" as a political accommodation symbol imply?

But, rather than limit Lachmon's thinking to a simple metaphor, let us look at several other bits of wisdom he has offered to explain himself. On his seventieth birthday in September 1986, he shared some aphorisms he had learned from his mother:

- A. Try to live in harmony with the enemy (if you live in the water, you must even try to coexist with the crocodile).
- B. Make no decisions emotionally (if your hand is under a stone, don't pull it away, but lift the stone with your free hand).
- C. Honor, money, or an elephant [i.e., the VHP's party symbol] isn't the most important thing in life, but caring well for whatever it is that falls to one's lot in life.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, these were prudent positions for these uncertain, and possibly dangerous, times.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLEBISCITE

At one point in the negotiations over a new constitution, Henck Arron was asked if he was pessimistic over Bouterse's reservations regarding a return to parliamentary democracy. "Oh, look," Arron said, "politicians often understand each other.... You have to know just who they're talking to, for one thing. The *Bevelhebber* was talking to his followers," implying that the choice of words was only for show. But how long, the reporter asked, must one wait to find out if he really meant it? "One of the most important things in life is to summon the patience to wait for the right moment to do things." People had waited for six years, said the interviewer. Wasn't that enough? "One's whole life," Arron answered, "is in fact a game of patience. You can never speed up the natural course of things, because then you'll be inviting error."<sup>2</sup> Many in the NPS predictably found fault with this measured sense of political strategy. What if Bouterse changed his mind once again, leaving them all in the lurch? Such a possibility was suggested when, angry at his own appointed National Assembly in February 1986, he had referred to it as a "puppet show" (*poppekast*).

Nevertheless, despite his frustrations with the legislature and the ongoing, ambiguous nature of the guerrilla war in the interior, Bouterse permitted the democratization process to continue, promising a mass meeting of the NPS, VHP, and KTPI in December 1986 that the draft constitution would be ready on March 31, 1987, and that elections would be held within a year thereafter. (The elections were actually scheduled for November 1987.) He also told reporters that an unnamed country had offered him a sizable amount of money if he would leave Suriname. "They thought I was [Ferdinand] Marcos!" he laughed. "Well, I have nowhere to go. I stay precisely here!"<sup>3</sup>

Such defiance may have inspired the *Bevrijdingsraad* to relocate to Washington, D.C., in a bid to attract American support for the Bush Negro rebellion. Speaking to newsmen, Henk Chin A Sen said that with only \$500,000 in military and other aid, the Jungle Commando would be able to overthrow Bouterse's government. Throughout the years, however, Washington had put its Surinamese policy on a short leash and deferred to the better judgment of The Hague.<sup>4</sup> Of course, \$500,000 is not a great deal of money, even in terms of covert operations; and if The Netherlands was pitching in, Washington would doubtless make its own contribution. But in terms of public diplomacy, Chin A Sen's timing was a bit late—the new constitution was to be unveiled on March 31, only a few days after the *Bevrijdingsraad*'s relocation. Despite Foreign Minister Van den Broek's condemnation of the Mooi Wana executions (December 2, 1986) as "bestial," his primary concern, and that of his countrymen, was the negotiations for a new constitution and return to democracy.

For his part, Bouterse was probably more concerned about getting full

diplomatic relations restored with The Netherlands than with preventing support for the rebels. Ambassador Van Houten had been declared *persona non grata* by Foreign Minister Henk Herrenberg in January, after he had sent a list of those murdered in the Mooi Wana incident to The Hague. The Hague responded by ousting a Surinamese diplomat and declaring that Van Houten would not be replaced until there had been substantial steps toward redemocratization. In the meantime, Herrenberg had been replaced by Heidweiller as Foreign Minister, and nothing at home or abroad seemed capable of derailing the redemocratization process.

All through the winter of 1987, information trickled out regarding the *Topberaad's* negotiations. On one issue there was no difficulty: local government. For over a hundred years, Suriname's evolving experiment with participatory government had seen all roads lead to Paramaribo. An undue centralization of power had the effect of entrenching the ethnic party machines and their *oude rotten*, with little opportunity for fresh infusions of proven talent. Now, the constitution drafters agreed, local (*ressort*) and district councils would be set up to provide local remedies and experience in problem-solving.

On January 24, it was announced that all parties had agreed to direct elections for the national as well as regional legislatures. On February 1, Lachmon told a gathering of VHP, NPS, and KTPI members that they had compromised on one of their stands—the direct election of the President. They had agreed that the President would be chosen indirectly by a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. This body would also have the power to remove a President by simple majority (i.e., by a vote of no confidence [Arts. 83.3, 90]). Lachmon denied that this indirect manner of election had been chosen to permit Bouterse to become President.

On March 17, Hans Buddingh' reported that agreement had been reached on the size of the National Assembly (fifty-one members elected by proportional representation in each of the country's ten districts). The assembly, the highest law-giving organ, would have a term of five years. It would elect the President for an equal term. If the necessary two-thirds support could not be obtained, even with a run-off between the top two candidates, a United People's Assembly, made up of the National Assembly and all members of the district and *ressort* councils, would decide by simple majority (Art. 181.2.b.).

A first view of the *Staatsraad* (Council of State) was also provided at this time. In earlier constitutions, the Governor (and President) had an Advisory Council. Under military rule this was converted into a much more powerful privy council (variously called the *Beleidscentrum*, *Denkgroep*, and *Topberaad*, not to mention the NMR itself). With powers somewhere between the earlier civilian and military extremes, the *Staatsraad* could, along with its general supervisory powers, suspend decisions of the Cabinet and other lower organs if they were in conflict with the constitution, the law, the government's program (*regeringsprogramma*), or the national interest (Art. 115.1). One might ask how

the government (i.e., the Cabinet and its chief minister, the Vice President) could get out of step with the President and *Staatsraad* in any of these areas. The transitional (*overgangs*) provisions in the document indicated that the body's membership must include representatives of the union and employers associations and the armed forces, at least in the period of the first government (Art. 185).

Thus, as a last remnant of the corporatist approach to government, the *Staatsraad* would be politically independent, capable of prompting the President in autonomous action—perhaps of the sort denied to President Ferrier in handling the 1976-77 and 1979-80 crises. In a deadlock between *Staatsraad* and government, the new constitution provided for two kinds of arbitration—by a Constitutional Court (Art. 144) or by a meeting of the United People's Assembly (Art. 181.2.c and d). The *Staatsraad* was also empowered—ambiguously—to seek "mobilization of the people when the national interest demands" (Art. 115.1.g).

On this latter point, as in several other passages of the draft constitution, the old parties found such sweeping language dangerous. They also expressed concern about the powers of the military authority (identified as "the military vanguard of the people of Suriname" laboring "for the national development and the liberation of the nation" (Art. 177.1 and 2) and the people's militia (promoted as "defenders of the Surinamese people"). Bouterse yielded on the latter complaint, and all reference to the militia was withdrawn. But the military was also provided with an altogether new body—the National Security Council. In the event that the National Assembly declared a state of civil or military emergency, this body would be convened and endowed with special powers regarding external and domestic security. Its members would include the President, Vice President, Chairman of the National Assembly, two representatives of the armed forces, and one representative each of the Minister of Justice, the Council of Ministers, and the Suriname Police Corps (Arts. 129 and 130).

While a number of major concessions had obviously been made—over a long period of give and take—the new constitution still rested upon a fairly radical preamble and an ambitious list of socioeconomic "goals," "rights," and "obligations" (Preamble, Arts. 4-51). The events of February 25, 1980, were commemorated in the preamble for their "renovation of social relations" in the "struggle against neocolonialist colonization" (preamble). Economic goals included a mixed economy "free from foreign domination," with "all modes of production by private enterprises" guaranteed "as much as possible" (Art. 5)]. Social goals included "a just division of the national income," "regional spreading of public utilities and economic activities," worker participation, and improvement in living standards (Art. 6).

Among the constitution's "rights and obligations" were commitments regarding work, unions, property, the family, youth, education, and health.

Workers had the right to strike (Art. 33), and employers the right to associate to defend their rights and interests (Art. 32), although property "shall fulfill a social function" (Art. 34). "Husband and wife are equal before the law," "parents shall have the same responsibilities toward legal and natural children," and "working women shall be entitled to paid maternity leave" (Art. 35.2,4,6). "Everyone shall have a right to good health" (Art. 36.1). Youth were guaranteed "special protection," particularly with regard to "access to education, culture, and work," "vocational schooling," and "physical training, sports, and recreation" (Art. 37). Development planning was geared to "a socially just society" (Art. 40) in which "natural riches and resources are property of the nation...used to promote economic, social and cultural development" (Art. 41). Consumer protection (Art. 48), affordable housing (Art. 49), protection of society's dependents (Art. 50), and provision of legal aid (Art. 51) were also responsibilities of the state in this ambitious new order. It must have been obvious to everyone that Suriname's "safety net" was woven with gossamer threads.

On March 31, when Bouterse presented the draft constitution, he announced that it would be put to a national referendum on September 30, 1987, and that national elections would follow on November 25, Independence Day. "On many occasions we've been tempted [*geprovoceerd*] to establish a military dictatorship," he said, "but each time ideals won out."<sup>5</sup> The election timetable took Arron and Lachmon by surprise. How the elections would be conducted in the war zones of eastern and southern Suriname remained to be worked out; but with most of the inhabitants either in exile (in French Guiana) or relocated to Paramaribo, few potential voters actually remained in the interior. (Many Saramakaners were virtually trapped on the upper Suriname River by the fighting, however.)

At the same news conference, Bouterse announced that the February 25th Movement (VFB) would not take part in the elections, since it was not a political party. But he hinted that he might be willing to stand for the presidency. Was The Netherlands inclined to loosen its purse strings to encourage the democratization process? Not as far as Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers was concerned. Humanitarian aid would continue, but the old relationships could be restored only after the November elections. "It all depends on Paramaribo," Lubbers said.

Bouterse now named an interim government to oversee the country's democratization. Headed by VFB member Jules Wijdenbosch (who had headed the government since Radhakishun's resignation in February), the new Cabinet was a mix of VFB, union, business, and old party members. Meanwhile, the VFB commenced to convert itself into the *Nationale Democratische Partij* (National Democratic Party, NDP) under the leadership of Bouterse and Wijdenbosch and the direction of Chas Mijns, Frank Playfair, and Ernie Brunings. Bouterse and his four Creole colleagues announced that all ethnic

groups would be represented on the NDP's advisory council, and "the great middle class will be represented as well."<sup>6</sup> The official inauguration was planned for July 5.

With political ambitions of his own and not willing to be put in a subordinate position to either the old parties or the NDP, Fred Derby pushed his fellow union leaders into creating an umbrella organization, the *Raad van de Vakbeweging in Suriname* (Council of Organized Labor in Suriname, RAVAKSUR). If it was to provide the basis for a united labor party in the upcoming elections, it would have to overcome the Moederbond's longstanding leaning toward the NPS and the appeal of other parties of the Left. Derby was reportedly very disappointed at the turnout (on Labor Day) for RAVAKSUR's inauguration, but under his direction the new entity would ultimately become an important player in national affairs. In fact, one of its first acts was to call for a dialogue with the Jungle Commando. Such a thought would be repugnant to the army. But thousands of jobs were at stake, threatened by the continuing warfare. On June 7, Derby announced creation of the *Surinaamse Partij van de Arbeid* (Surinamese Labor Party, SPA), to be inaugurated on July 1. More and more it looked like elections were truly in the cards!

Indeed, it soon became a multiparty struggle, as the old political parties announced formation of the *Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling* in July. "Our struggle is near its end," Lachmon said. "We have been steady, cautious, and principled, moving like a turtle rather than a stag. A stag doesn't see anything but his goal, while the turtle can see everything, even while he moves ahead."<sup>7</sup> The Front's public inauguration came at the beginning of August. According to the *NRC-Handelsblad*, it drew the largest crowd in Suriname's political history—over 60,000. Pronouncing the invocation, a Protestant minister prayed for Suriname's deliverance from the devil, and Lachmon and other party leaders seemed to pull out all the stops in castigating the military for its bad government. The strong language—and huge response—led a number of military supporters to demand that Bouterse punish his critics. But Bouterse had traveled that road before. Instead, he resigned from the *Topberaad*, throwing all government responsibility to the old parties. This was not exactly what they had wanted. Prime Minister Wijdenbosch then threatened his Cabinet's resignation, since it combined both NDP and Front members.

The Front clearly got the message. By the weekend, all parties were gathered in a political summit meeting at Leonsberg, near the mouth of the Suriname River. After lengthy talks, both sides agreed to "recognize a mutual responsibility to work in all peace and sincerity for stability and national unity as the basis for realizing true democracy." Agreement was also reached in support of the "four renewals"—the principles enunciated at the outset of the revolution by the Chin A Sen government. The Leonsberg Accord also included an interesting secret provision, to be explored below. While things got back to normal, the near abortion of redemocratization left Bouterse's opponents more

cautious—their heads half in/half out of their shell, nervously on the lookout.

Indeed, with the Front ducking for cover, the only consistently outspoken critic of the military was the Committee of Christian Churches (CCK). Comparing themselves with the rabbis of pre-war Warsaw, they alleged that the rule of law and protection of human rights had been sold out. Urging public rejection of the new constitution in the September 30 referendum, the CCK found that the military and the President would be too strong under its terms, undermining the role of the National Assembly. Most alarming, they claimed, was the transitional provision that would leave all decree law from the military years intact for five years (Art. 183). Moravian Church minister Rudi Polanen, Vice Chairman of the CCK, warned that "the military authority will still maintain its totalitarian power" despite the formalities of democracy. Spokesmen for the Front answered that certain safeguards against such abuses had been built into the constitution, and in any case, "It is a bit like an old jalopy—it can get us where we're going, and once we're there, we can have it repaired."<sup>8</sup> The *NRC-Handelsblad* felt that the CCK's point was well taken: "The military control a power position with their Uzis that is inconsistent with a democratic political system." In this sense, they compared the old party leaders' circumstances with those of Argentine President Raul Alfonsin: "Suriname is certainly not the only country in which civilian politicians are trying to smooth the way for democracy by means of difficult and sometimes controversial compromises."<sup>9</sup> But what manner of strength could the weak, even with their numbers, muster in any confrontation with the strong?

Because of the discrepancies in political representation between Paramaribo and its immediately surrounding area, and because of the inconsistent grouping of peoples in the interior, Suriname's map had been redrawn in the 1980s, redividing the greater Paramaribo area into north and south (rather than core and periphery), bundling the interior into a new district (Sipaliwini), and making a number of other, minor adjustments. All in all, 209 voting precincts were created for the 195,000 registered voters (in a population estimated at 400,000). With the voting age lowered to eighteen, a fairly large group of Surinamers (aged eighteen to thirty-one) now had their first opportunity for national decision-making.

Despite the CCK's criticisms, all political parties urged their followers to vote "yes" in the referendum. With a 62 percent turnout, 95 percent of those voting gave their approval to the constitution. The outcome was pleasing to Bouterse. He told a radio and television audience that seven years of military rule had been necessary to force a break with the past. "In this learning process, mistakes have been made: mistakes out of ignorance, inexperience, and bad judgment."<sup>10</sup> But, as he told the U.N. General Assembly in October, "the seeds of revolutionary change which were planted in 1980 are now bearing fruit." Nevertheless, he told the *New York Times* that if the President (in a new government) exercised his right to remove him as army commander, the army

might not be willing to accept that.<sup>11</sup>

### BALLOTS OR BULLETS?

In his October U.N. address, Bouterse was obliged to call the body's attention to the ongoing guerrilla war in his country—the work of "parasites and terrorists, who, serving the interests of colonialism, have caused the death of countless innocent men, women, and children, caught in the crossfire." Indeed, on the eve of the referendum, a French medical group reported that the army had murdered forty Bush Negroes in the village of Pokigron on the southern edge of Brokopondo Lake in central Suriname. Foreign Minister Henk Heidweiller immediately challenged the claim, accusing the French and Dutch governments of trying once again to depict the Suriname government as barbarians. The French medical team, in fact, admitted an error in their reporting, scaling down the number killed to fifteen. To ascertain the truth of this claim, a group of journalists, in the company of Battalion Commander Graanoogst and a group of thirty members of the (pro-Bouterse) *Liga van Patriotten*, trekked toward the village of Pokigron in early October. A few miles short of their destination, they came under fire, and three *Liga* members were wounded. The Jungle Commando and National Army each accused the other of the attack, and the facts of Pokigron remained disputed.<sup>12</sup>

Fighting continued throughout the election campaign. The Jungle Commando hijacked a plane taking medical supplies to the Saramakaners to fight a malaria threat. In eastern Suriname, they ambushed a National Army group, killing one and wounding two. When the Secretary-General of the United Nations offered to mediate the conflict, however, his good offices were turned down by both sides.<sup>13</sup>

Three of the country's ten (voting) districts were now the scene of military engagements: Sipaliwini (comprising two-thirds or more of the country, from the Brazilian border to roughly the lowest rapids along the north-flowing rivers), Brokopondo (surrounding the lake of the same name), and Marowijne (the easternmost coastal region, site of a number of Djuka and Amerindian villages, as well as plantations and mines). In a typical action in October, near the bauxite town of Moengo, the Jungle Commando claimed to have ambushed and killed ten soldiers.

Safeguarding the election process in the interior now became a heated issue in the National Assembly. Bouterse insisted that voting be carried out in these three districts, but the old parties opposed the idea, since no campaign could conceivably be conducted under warlike conditions. Better to postpone elections in these districts until after a cease-fire. But for Bouterse, there was no substitute for victory. Let the refugees from these areas vote at special polling places, he suggested, in the camps in Suriname and in French Guiana. Article

61 of the new constitution, he reminded them, speaks of *nationwide* elections.

A majority in the *Topberaad* rejected this interpretation, emphasizing the language that representatives were to be "chosen by district." There was nothing constitutionally wrong with postponing elections in the three districts, they said, especially given the terms of Article 23, by which certain rights might be "submitted to limitation" due to emergency conditions. "Let's hold a referendum and let the residents decide for themselves," suggested the *Bevel*. "What kind of referendum," the Front members asked. "A referendum in the three districts," Bouterse answered. "No," said the Front, "it should be in the nation as a whole." And on it went.

On one occasion during this prolonged debate, several thousand supporters of the old parties and of the *Bevel* gathered outside the office of the Prime Minister where the Council of Ministers and *Topberaad* were wrestling with the issue.

The meeting was complicated in the evening hours by a crowd outside that had grown to several thousand. Supporters of Bouterse and the NDP made use of megaphones and tapped electricity from the ministry for their sound systems. Supporters of the...old parties and the other partners in the *Topberaad*...brought in an auto with a loudspeaker along with a *kawina* band making some lively music. The noise finally was so great that the leaders meeting inside could no longer hear each other. [Both sides finally agreed to a truce, and representatives went outside to send the crowd home.]<sup>14</sup>

How about dividing the seats in this ten-seat region proportionally, according to the vote count in the rest of the country? New elections might then be held after a cease-fire. Unacceptable, said the *Bevel*. The debate was ended unilaterally with Bouterse's decision to proceed with elections in the three districts—no referendum, no postponement, no subsequent reelection. Special voting booths would be set up for internal refugees, but that was all.

Ironically, the date for filing to run in the elections passed without any candidate lists having been presented in either Marowijne or Sipaliwini, and only the NDP had submitted candidates in the Brokopondo district. Rather than break the "unity" of the first elections under the new constitution, Wijdenbosch extended the date for party registration. Both the Front and Derby's SPA refused to enter candidates in the war districts, calling it unconscionable to let a minority speak for a majority that had fled the area. At the last minute, the Javanese *Pendawalima* and PALU managed to submit lists—both consisting largely of Bush Negro candidates.

Bouterse's stubbornness on the three districts' election issue was based on his desire to control at least a third of the seats in the new legislature. Such a position would allow him to have a voice in the selection of the new President and to block any amendments to the constitution. The *NRC-Handelsblad* fully expected that ten of the seventeen seats he needed would come from the war zone.<sup>15</sup> This was probably the expectation of the Front itself, which, in the

secret addendum to the Leonsberg Accord, had agreed to continued power-sharing between the Front and the NDP after the elections. Informants from both sides agreed on the provisions: the presidency would go to former Development Minister Frank Essed, and Jules Wijdenbosch would remain head of the Cabinet as Vice President. Bouterse, Arron, Lachmon, Soemita, Derby, and others currently on the *Topberaad* would take seats on the new *Staatsraad*, providing guidance to the government from its inner sanctum.<sup>16</sup>

The beauty of this arrangement was its potential to reduce conflict by shifting the site of decision-making between government and opposition out of the public arena. If party bosses could resolve their disagreements in private, the need to use the legislature for perennial campaigning and disruption might be brought under some control. In political science terms, Suriname's legislatures had adequately performed the function of political articulation (i.e., the expression of particular interests from groups at the grass roots) but not the equally important one of political aggregation (i.e., national program development and consensus-building).<sup>17</sup>

Except for the period of *verbroedering* between 1958 and 1967, Suriname had experienced articulation without aggregation—a dynamic that tended to produce irresponsibility, paralysis, and/or dictatorship. Indeed, *both* the democratic regimes of the 1970s *and* the military rule of the 1980s exhibited this fissiparous and self-destructive quality. Now there were two good opportunities for political aggregation: in the legislature, if the Front were to win a two-thirds majority of seats there; or, barring that outcome, in the *Staatsraad*, where the major interests in society would be represented and the temptation of public play-acting removed.

## CAMPAIGN '87

As the November elections drew near, observer teams from a number of countries and international organizations began to arrive to monitor the campaign and the voting. In the seven districts outside of the war zone, party lists were entered by the Front, Bouterse's NDP, Derby's SPA, PALU, and the PL. Ideologically, the PL and the Front were centrist, while the NDP, SPA, and PALU presumably competed for the Left's vote. Although all parties tried to meet the Surinamese appetite for colorful oratory, music, and T-shirts, public attention was centered on the Front's challenge to the NDP.

For one thing, the parties had broadened their base and given more chance for input by the grass roots. Hans Breeveld, a political scientist and member of the NPS Youth Council, credited Arron with having opened up the channels of mobility in the NPS, one of the lessons learned from 1975-80; and, while the VHP was still controlled by a smaller clique, it, too, had opened its ranks and offered a number of fresh, popular candidates in its share of the Front's lists.

In its campaign, the Front picked a shoe—an old shoe (*oro shu*)—as its symbol and had spun out a whole raft of slogans (e.g., "*Oro shu no ati*," an old shoe doesn't hurt). Lachmon, as leader of the Front, was identified as "Jumbo," because of the VHP's elephant symbol. "We want Jumbo," crowds would shout whenever Lachmon arrived. "Jumbo shoes" became a challenge that no party but the Front could fill. The NDP came up with the slogan "*soso lobi*" (only love), but then found it transformed by graffiti into "*soso trobi*" (only trouble) and "*soso lasi*" (only losers).<sup>18</sup>

As the campaign wore on, Hans Buddingh' reported that the NDP was drawing crowds only one-tenth the size of the Front's, and that Bouterse was furious at the obvious rejection that lay in store for him. On one occasion, as a Hindustani NDP candidate explained to a small audience how to fill out their ballots, someone threw some rocks onto the roof of the school where they were meeting. "One-fourth of the group at this meeting," writes Buddingh',

turned out to be [NDP] marshals. They rushed outside and one of them pulled a pistol from under his NDP T-shirt. A girl of sixteen or so was questioned. "If the enemy is around, you've got to take action," said one intrepid marshal. A soldier in the National Army, he was volunteering his services to the NDP. "I've had experience in the war zone. Women use hand grenades there."<sup>19</sup>

Buddingh' estimated that the NDP was spending hundreds of thousands of guilders on their campaign, judging by the T-shirts, shirts, and other clothing, and the pins, caps, food, and drink. NDP posters were displayed on palm trees everywhere. But, as a Front activist pointed out, "trees don't vote." By the same token, the NDP's near monopoly of television was felt likely to cause resentment and to boomerang. A newly constructed NDP conference hall, the size of a sports stadium, was built at an estimated cost of \$2 million—at a time when supplies of building materials in the country were virtually nonexistent. Rumors circulated that the money had been contributed by businessmen indebted to the VFB/NDP for import licenses and currency manipulations. Other favors were being doled out as well. In the last few months, directors of various government bureaus had been ordered to provide temporary employment for members of the people's militia in contravention of the government's earlier announced hiring freeze. Ironically, a number of VFB members interviewed by Buddingh' indicated that they would not vote for the NDP because "it has betrayed the revolution."<sup>20</sup>

Gary Brana-Shute tells an alarming story about the NDP's last rally two nights before the election, when it was clear that the NDP would lose in a landslide. Bouterse arrived at a major rally three hours late and clearly intoxicated.

He mounted the podium, wearing sunglasses and a shirt more than discreetly open, wobbled a bit, mopped his brow and launched into a discussion of how socialism would

remove the perils of multiethnicity. He was surrounded by his Creole lieutenants. Groping for a metaphor, he claimed that Suriname can no longer have "Hindustani pandits huddled in their temples going 'kakara, kakara, kakara.'"...He then made reference to the fallen comrades of the revolution and demanded of the audience [that] they remove their campaign caps for a moment of silence. Some did, some did not, and in an outburst of anger he told them to put their caps back on and to remove them again when he gave the order....He began to wobble, yanked at his slipping pants, and was escorted off stage.<sup>21</sup>

## READING THE OUTCOME

At dawn on November 25, long lines began to form at the country's polling places. Voters had to choose candidates for 859 seats in 62 *ressort* councils, 10 district councils, and the National Assembly. Observers noted delays in processing names, but much of it was a matter of inexperience and of computer error in the issuance of *oproepskaarten* (election notices). *De West* reported a turnout of over 88 percent, which included the depopulated interior districts (and their alternative polling places in Paramaribo). Voting was both orderly and colorful—with lines snaking among trees and the covered walkways of schools, out of the blazing sunshine. Where there was no escaping the sun, a rainbow of umbrellas provided shelter. Representatives of most of the contending parties were present at each precinct to show followers the "correct" manner of voting. NDP teams presented voters with rolls of toilet paper at one of the precincts I visited—a not insubstantial gift in these hard times.

But it was quickly clear that the Front was going to win handsomely. Front T-shirts and other paraphernalia were everywhere. As the day wore on, Front members became more and more celebratory, though by evening they were warned to "cool it" by their leaders—to avoid provoking a military action canceling the hard-won benefits. By February 27, it was clear that the Front had won all but one seat in the seven districts outside of the war zone. That seat had gone to the NDP in Paramaribo, getting 8,577 votes there to the Front's 85,386 (see Table 7.1). What was even more amazing was the meager success of the NDP in the war zone. In Sipaliwini, where Bouterse had worked hard a year earlier to separate the Matawai tribe and their *Granman* Lafanti from the Jungle Commando, most votes went to the Bush Negro candidates of the Javanese *Pendawalima*. The PL picked up another seat in Brokopondo, for a total of four, and PALU also picked up four seats—two in Marowijne and two in Brokopondo. The NDP had to settle for only two of the war zone seats, one in Marowijne and one in Sipaliwini.

Nevertheless, by pre-coup standards, one could detect erosion in the ranks of the traditional political parties—and in each ethnic bloc: in Coronie, an NPS stronghold, the NPS lost votes to the NDP and PALU; Saramacca,

**TABLE 7.1**  
**VOTES AND SEATS BY POLITICAL PARTY AND DISTRICT, 1987**

	Front	%	Seats	NDP	%	Seats	Others <sup>a</sup>	%	Seats
Paramaribo	85,386	87.8	16	8,577	8.8	1	3,259	3.4	1
Wanica	29,317	89.0	7	2,212	6.7		1,398	4.2	
Nickerie	13,384	86.4	5	1,472	9.5		641	4.1	
Coronie	974	67.6	2	227	15.8		240	16.7	
Saramacca	5,104	82.4	3	882	14.2		248	4.0	
Commewijne	8,709	82.8	4	705	6.7		1,099	10.5	
Marowijne	-	-	-	395	33.8	1	772	66.2	2
Para	4,323	75.5	3	1,189	20.8		211	3.7	
Brokopondo	-	-	-	120	21.0		452	79.0	3
Sipaliwini	-	-	-	219	25.0	1	658	75.0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147,197</b>	<b>85.5</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>5,998</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8,939</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>8</b>

a. Includes the PL taking one seat in Brokopondo and three in Sipaliwini; PALU taking two seats each in Marowijne and Brokopondo; and the SPA and the Javanese PPRS winning no seats.

SOURCE: *De West*, December 9, 1987.

predominantly Hindustani, saw some of its votes (perhaps mostly Creole and Javanese) go to the NPD; the largely Javanese district of Commewijne witnessed vote loss to the NDP, PL, and each of the other parties; and Para, location of bauxite mining and resettlement area for many Bush Negro migrants, gave one-fifth of its votes to the NDP.

On February 27, Bouterse showed up at the Torarica Hotel to congratulate Lachmon, Arron, and Soemita on their victory. "I actually had looked for you to come on Election night," goaded Lachmon. "You were far too busy tallying all your votes," the *Bevel* responded. But there were smiles all around as he reiterated his willingness to honor the election results. He, Wijdenbosch, and Capt. Ronald Olfers<sup>22</sup> wished the winners "strength" (*sterkte*), implying that more tests lay ahead. They would need it. When asked by Hans Buddingh' what would be done about the human rights violations of the recent past, Arron answered, "Surinamese problems will be solved in Surinamese ways."<sup>23</sup> Given the proliferation of "Surinamese ways" in the past decade, such a response gave little assurance that the new leaders even had a plan.

From The Netherlands, Andre Haakmat warned that Bouterse could use the

legacy of decree law to delimit the scope of governing authority in the hands of the new Cabinet. Military power, he argued, was capable of nullifying all the new legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Despite the landslide victory giving the Front the power to amend the constitution, Haakmat was worried by Lachmon's claim that "changing the constitution is not our highest priority." He could only conclude that the elections had done nothing to change the power position of Bouterse. In fact, he wrote, Bouterse was really the winner—getting a constitutional legitimation of his military power within the state system.<sup>24</sup>

As if to confirm Haakmat's view, Bouterse sought to legitimize his position in the public's eyes by calling an election within the Military Authority (*Militair Gezag*) on December 5. All military from the rank of corporal up would be eligible to vote, and the whole election would be directed by an "independent election bureau." Nineteen officers ran for the seven positions of the Authority. Not surprisingly, the top leaders were confirmed in their positions: Bouterse, Graanoogst, Mijns, and Sital led the winners.

Another reason for the military election may have been to divert attention from the commemoration, just a few days later, of the December 1982 killings. It was clear that a major ceremony was in the works, and Sital warned the press that honoring the memory of reactionaries was provocation. "Let this be the last time," he told them. "We can use our energies for better things." Not about to sit passively by, the military organized its own commemoration of the "70 national heroes" (soldiers) who had died in defense of Suriname's sovereignty since the 1980 coup. Few civilians joined the armed forces in this ceremony, held on the waterfront square that marked the site of the old police headquarters. In contrast, 3,000 people gathered in an all-night vigil near the Moederbond headquarters in remembrance of the December killings.

As a show of support for the Front, Ronnie Brunswijk announced a unilateral cease-fire by the Jungle Commando that would extend at least through January 1, 1988. The military responded by releasing the last of the Bush Negro prisoners taken at Moengo Tapoe the previous winter. But Brunswijk made it clear that these were simply gestures. His terms for a peaceful settlement were more demanding: (1) the constitution must be amended to subordinate the National Army to complete civilian control; (2) individuals responsible for military crimes must be fully prosecuted; (3) human rights must be fully guaranteed; (4) a safe return of refugees from French Guiana and The Netherlands must be provided; and (5) economic preconditions must be established assuring those refugees a decent living.

## THE LEGACY OF EA FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Depending on whether you measure the Dutch economic sanctions from the fall of Chin A Sen or the December murders, Suriname's economy had been

forced into self-sufficiency for close to five, or even six, years. Reserves had been exhausted, and printing presses were all that stood between an empty treasury and a swollen payroll. By the end of 1986, the government had a total debt (mostly to the Central Bank) of Sf 2.4 billion.<sup>25</sup> The socioeconomic consequence was runaway inflation. Even after some effort to freeze the prices of basic commodities, inflation in 1986 was calculated at 18.4 percent.<sup>26</sup>

The government now abandoned its controls over that portion of the import trade that did not need hard currency from the state's own reserves—in other words, that was financed by private sources of foreign currency. Called *eenmalige aanbrenng* ("one-time account," popularly transmuted to *eigen aanbrenng*, "own account," or EA for short), this approach virtually threw the doors open for corruption and other illegal activities to assure the availability of hard currency. Smuggling with Guyana intensified, export earnings were underreported, a black market in foreign currencies developed, and a domestic "parallel market" for goods and services began to thrive.

Price-supported commodities were either available on a regular basis (like milk) at central distribution centers or periodically (like rice, onions, soap, cooking oil) at designated neighborhood centers. Many families received packages from relatives in The Netherlands (where a number of companies were organized to ship such supplies). Still other Surinamers could shop at Dutch prices for a variety of commodities in a warehouse in downtown Paramaribo—provided they (or someone else) had opened a line of credit in Dutch guilders in the merchant's Netherlands account. Beneficiaries of these last two types of trade may well have sold their goods on the black market at a profit. While many individuals benefitted from these transactions, the number of large-scale EA importers was reportedly very limited. The best known was Dilip Sardjoe, a rice dealer who doubled as treasurer of the VHP and was an intimate friend of the Bouterse regime. Besides his capacity to wheel and deal throughout the economy, he became immensely popular among his Hindustani and military friends for his ability to bankroll their various projects.

But if there were no absolute shortages in the economy after the introduction of EA, it was because the shelves were filled with goods four to ten times higher in price than they had been before. Public reactions to this parallel market(place)—so visible to all yet forbidden to the poor—are easy to imagine. Nevertheless, many Surinamers quickly learned new forms of hustling from the Sardjoes and their military sponsors. They were abetted, if they were lucky, by the government. For example, to get an official import license, one approached the Ministry of Economic Affairs, filling out a plethora of forms. The requests deemed "worthy" were forwarded to a four-way discussion between the Minister, the head of the Central Bank, the Minister of Finance, and the Prime Minister. Approvals were forthcoming on only about one-tenth of the requests made. The lucky few who were approved were permitted to buy foreign exchange at the official rate (still Sf 1.8 to the dollar). The prospects for

immense profit-taking upon successful completion of the importation were substantial.

Marian Husken and Rudie Kagie offer one mind-boggling example. Let's say your friend at the Central Bank and the other officials agreed to let you import a used car from Miami. You told them the car was going to cost \$12,000. So they sold you the \$12,000 for Sf 21,600 at the official exchange rate. Let's say you had to give the Miami dealer only \$9,000—complete with a bribe for the doctored paperwork. You could exchange the \$3,000 you had left over on the Suriname black market for enough to cover your initial purchase of currency *and* the exorbitant import taxes (perhaps Sf 20,000). Somewhere between the official exchange rate and the black market rate a differential existed that was so great that it gave you a \$9,000 car for free!<sup>27</sup>

Since not every Surinamer was likely to make it past the gatekeepers at the National Treasury for the big items, Hans Buddingh' provided information on a much more modest—and common—scam. Since every Surinamer is permitted to buy hard currency as "travel money" once a year (roughly \$175 per person), the trip to Holland had come to offer a lucrative differential for even the ordinary traveler. To get the \$175 (or its Dutch equivalent), one first had to have a plane ticket. Tickets were priced at the official exchange rate in Paramaribo (approximately Sf 1,600 round-trip to Schiphol). But only so many seats were sold in the nonconvertible Surinamese currency, and travelers usually had to wait for months for one of the Sf seats to become available. When the moment arrived, the would-be traveler would borrow Dutch guilders or American dollars from relatives and exchange them for Surinamese guilders on the black market to buy the necessary ticket(s) to show the Central Bank. The bank would then sell the traveler \$175 in foreign currency for the trip...at the low official exchange rate. This would be more than enough to pay back the loan, making the trip virtually on the house.<sup>28</sup>

It is tempting to think that everyone in Suriname had enough spare capital—or the necessary relatives abroad—to keep themselves afloat by one or another of these penny-ante operations. Like it or not, hustling (*hosselen*) of one kind or another became a way of life for almost everyone. As the new, presumably democratic, era dawned, the prospect of these inequities in Suriname's economy being outlawed was probably hopeless. They had been created at least partially to appease the VHP in the period of *verzoening* between it and the military (1985-8). Too many top VHP members and others in the Front were profiting from the structures to dismantle them.

Repeatedly, the bauxite companies, the IMF, and Suriname's largest private bank, *De Surinaamsche Bank*, urged the government to devalue its currency. The government's response was that the poor and the middle class would be hurt—more, in fact, than the upper class, which seemingly played the parallel market the most. The Inter-American Development Bank sharply disagreed, arguing that the parallel market discouraged production, as witnessed by the

persistent negative growth rates and the rise of unemployment to over 30 percent. Playing politics with EA skewed priorities in favor of importers of consumer goods and their elite customers. In contrast, the *Stichting Machinale Landbouw* (Foundation for Mechanized Agriculture) in Wageningen reported that in eight years, no new tractors had been purchased. Because of this, and the lack of spare parts, the rice harvest was down 20 percent in 1987.

Despite acknowledgment of the problem, there was no end to the expansionary growth of the budget. Deficits had gone from Sf 81 million to Sf 468 million (half of the government's budget and a third of the national income), with 60 percent of outlays going for salaries and wages, 10 to 12 percent for subsidies, and 15 percent for rent and debt payment. Barter deals had been worked out with other Third World countries, but Suriname always seemed to get the worst of the deal; its raw materials were always priced down *vis-a-vis* the manufactured goods it needed. Even credits from Brazil, totaling some \$50 million after 1984, were now cut out.

Obviously, the only salvation for the country lay in the restoration of good relations with The Netherlands. But burned once by their appeasement of headstrong policy priorities under the Arron government, The Netherlands was not about to be burned again by a too-quick conciliation with Bouterse or the new government. Development Minister Bukman had set the tone in the period between the referendum and the national elections, authorizing Nf 260,000 (about \$150,000) for humanitarian aid for the victims of the fighting in eastern Suriname and among the refugees in French Guiana. Regarding resumption of more substantial, long-term aid, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Development said that the old CONS structure and procedures were no longer adequate to handle the remaining Nf 1.6 billion (\$600 million) in development aid. The Dutch were not about to return to a situation where they accepted "every plan the Surinamese delegation laid on the table...without murmur, so afraid were we of being accused of neocolonialism."<sup>29</sup> Henceforth, there would be personnel rotations to keep the Dutch team from becoming too cozy with their counterparts. Moreover, wherever possible, they would put their money into multilateral channels, to internationalize their assistance.

High expectations regarding the November elections brought a large number of Dutch observers to Suriname—from the press, the two chambers of Parliament, and as members of the European Parliament. All expressed general satisfaction with the conduct of the overall proceedings and the manner in which Bouterse seemed to accept the outcome. Nevertheless, they seemed to hearken to the warnings of Haakmat and others that the military had not played their last cards. The resumption of aid had more preconditions than the holding of free elections, according to Foreign Minister Van den Broek. Early in December, he declared that the situation in eastern Suriname would have to be normalized to the point where the Surinamese refugees in The Netherlands and elsewhere could be resettled.

## COMMENTARY

Foreign Minister Henk Heidweiller, on the eve of the election of 1987, probably gave the best analysis of the military interregnum and its contribution to Suriname's history. Predicting the loss by Bouterse's NDP to the old political parties, Heidweiller said that this would not necessarily reflect a defeat for the revolution. The ethnic basis of the old parties had threatened the "Lebanonization" of Suriname. The military stopped that by their coup. Whatever else one might say, they had at least reduced the level of ethnic tension in the country. Thanks to the revolution the old parties had learned that they must forge unity in a multiethnic society, and that they should not look to The Netherlands so much as to the American continent. Recalling how the Dutch had wanted Sukarno gone before their aid to Indonesia could be resumed, Heidweiller feared it was unlikely that aid would be restored to Suriname anytime soon.

Had the effort to draw up an idealistic and elaborate constitution been a waste of time? A Latin American viewing such an exercise might cynically observe *obedezco pero no cumpro* (I respect [the document's legitimacy], but I can't comply with it). After all, it was a paper document, drafted under questionable circumstances. Time would have to demonstrate how widespread compliance was before it could be judged a living document. Perhaps Lachmon was right in not immediately moving to adjust it. Let it show the workability of its principal features first.

Popular support for the constitution was certainly encouraging. It was even more encouraging in the landslide it gave to the Front. Ironically, the chief result of seven years of military rule was to help the old ethnic parties bury their animosities and forge anew the consociational alliance that had marked the happier days of the late 1950s and early 1960s. This was a hard way to transcend ethnic politics, but Bouterse and his brothers in arms deserve some credit as unwitting matchmakers.

## NOTES

1. *De Ware Tijd*, Sept. 20, 1986.
2. *Ibid.*, July 17, 1986.
3. *Ibid.*, Dec. 13, 1986.

4. The one exception that we know of was the plan by the CIA shortly after the December murders to do a "coup feasibility study." Called "the dumbest fucking idea I ever heard of in my life" by Senator Barry Goldwater, the plan was vetoed by the Congressional Intelligence Committee. See Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 240-41.

5. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Apr. 1, 1987.

6. *Ibid.*, May 4, 1987.

7. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1987.

8. *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1987.

9. *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1987.

10. *Ibid.*, Oct. 1, 1987.

11. *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1987; see also *NRC-Handelsblad*, Oct. 3 and 7, 1987.

12. The ambiguity regarding the Pokigron incidents deepened as a "survivor" of a Jungle Commando shootout with the army "confessed" to the attack on the journalists. A Brunswijk spokesman denounced the testimony, saying the man had never been in the Jungle Commando and pointing to the obvious way he was being coached before the television camera. The "survivor" reportedly died a few days after his testimony. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Nov. 6, 1987.

13. One reason for the rejection by Bouterse's side was that the offer was made by Amos Wako, a Kenyan jurist who had been the chief U.N. investigator of the December 1982 murders. He had returned in August 1987 to investigate the Mooi Wana killings of the previous December. His reports sharply criticized the military on both occasions. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Nov. 6, 1987.

14. *Ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1987.

15. *Ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1987.

16. Interviews with Chas Mijnaals, Ernie Brunings, Peter Sanches, Arti Jessurun, and Eva Essed-Fruin, summer 1990.

17. For these and other functional categories of system evaluation, see Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966).

18. Gary Brana-Shute, "Old Shoes and Elephants: Electoral Resistance in Suriname," in Gary Brana-Shute, ed., *Resistance and Rebellion* (Williamsburg, Va.: College of William and Mary, 1990), 220.

19. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Nov. 19, 1987.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Brana-Shute, "Old Shoes and Elephants," 221. Another informant interpreted the "slipping pants" episode as an attempt by a disgusted Bouterse to expose himself to the audience—an attempt that was arrested by the quick action of his aides.

22. Olfers had led the protest in August, after the Front's mammoth meeting, calling on Bouterse to show the Front "who was boss." *NRC-Handelsblad*, Nov. 30, 1987.

23. *Ibid.*, Nov. 28, 1987.

24. Andre Haakmat, "Bouterse's rol nog niet uitgespeeld," *NRC-Handelsblad*, Dec. 1, 1987.

25. Hans Buddingh', "Een Land in de Greep van het Zwarte Circuit," *NRC-Handelsblad*, Supplement Mens en Bedrijf, Apr. 22, 1987.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Marian Husken and Rudie Kagie, "Zwarte koers: 'Er wordt ontwikkelingshulp gegeven, maar een kip is niet te betalen,'" *Vrij Nederland*, Mar. 31, 1990, 11.

28. *NRC-Handelsblad*, July 25, 1990.

29. *Ibid.*, Nov. 6, 1987.



## 8

# Democracy Bent, but Not Broken

You're a "full citizen" if you are arrested by the police and charged in a normal manner. You're a "semi-citizen" if you live in Moengo, where there are no police but only the Jungle Commando. If the military police pick you up, you're "no citizen." That is, unless you're caught red-handed. There is also the "military citizen" with special privileges. Everything's OK for them. You can carry a weapon without a license. You can speak with authority on anything, and you can arrest whomever you want.

"Dingen van de dag"

*De Ware Tijd*, May 12, 1990

As the saying goes, it takes two to tango. But the most recent experiment with democracy in Suriname suggests that the interest in coming together to "put country first" was intermittent, at best, on the part of the principal actors. Other agendas took priority. The old parties, finally back in power, seemed to put self-preservation ahead of all else. The military, glad to shed some of the headaches of direct government, exhibited a minimal dedication to democracy after 1987, seeking instead to maximize their autonomy and what remained of their power. Their civilian ally, the NDP, with its curious amalgam of ideologically correct Marxism and unscrupulous obstructionism, was the only force that seemed to enjoy the democratic renaissance. But its tactics (and those of its military sponsor) were almost surely self-defeating.

Among the old behemoths, the NPS was the most tormented and unpredictable. Toward Bouterse many of its members felt the unreasoning wrath that one can feel only toward the betrayal by one of their own.

Bouterse, like many in the PNR, PNP, NMR, PALU, VP, RVP, and NDP, was a Creole whose first political home had been the NPS. Many had left the party because of unsatisfied ambition or new ideological persuasions; others, because of the NPS's corruption, rigidity, and narrow personalism. But the rank and file kept the faith. Bouterse's coup, his unrelenting persecution of Arron and other NPS officeholders, and his subsequent brutality toward the (mostly Creole) protest leaders in 1982 led many to seek more than just the military's ouster from power. Whether the NPS had a hand in sponsoring or encouraging the Brunswijk insurgency may never be known. But the behavior of many NPS members in and out of the National Assembly suggested that a desire for vengeance (as justified as it might be) was getting in the way of their handling the other business of state. More important, disagreements with their alliance partners on how to handle the military began to cripple the government.

The VHP was also somewhat torn, but by quite different forces. On the one hand, there were the wealthy traders who had managed to contrive new paths to wealth with the help of the military. On the other were the old *parliamentariers* whose interests were a combination of ethnic defensiveness (constituent services) and a narrow concern with procedural tactics, as opposed to any grand designs or planning. For Suriname, buffeted by dramatic struggles over power and direction, such behavior was the functional equivalent of burying one's head in the sand. Standing (or was it bending?) between these two factions was the party's and legislature's *Voorzitter* (Chairman), Lachmon. As the grand old man of Suriname's politics, he commanded a kind of automatic respect. But if he had a game plan of some kind, it was hard to decipher. As time passed, it seemed that buying time (waiting until their second term, presumably in 1993) was the Front's only goal.

Finally, there was the Jungle Commando. If its goal had been the restoration of democracy, why hadn't it proceeded to disband upon the Front's accession to power? Obviously there was a deeper grudge battle going on, with Brunswijk out to get Bouterse and all those responsible for the despoliation of the Bush Negroes. Ironically, the longer the rebels held out, the longer it would take for economic reconstruction to occur—in the interior *and in the coastal economy*. Dutch foreign aid, dedicated to benefit *all* inhabitants, would be held hostage to the guerrilla war. The Front government, too, was caught in this bind. And while the guerrillas were able to work out a deal with the Front, Bouterse's veto of it, and the coincidental emergence of a rival guerrilla band (closing, in effect, the rest of Suriname's interior) sent the prospects for economic development further into disarray.

In Suriname it took dozens, not two, to tango. And the steps for *this* dance had yet to be invented.

## THE FRONT GOVERNMENT

One month each was allotted following the election to (1) the swearing in of the new National Assembly and (2) the selection of the new President and his government. The Front did not treat these as outside limits, permitting faster action, but took the full measure of time, as if putting together a coalition from scratch. The delay did not make much sense, given the urgency of getting to work on the economic and civil war issues.

Because he was the oldest elected representative, Jaggernath Lachmon automatically became Chairman *pro tempore* of the National Assembly, swearing in all the others. Even the ten representatives from the virtually depopulated interior districts were seated. Once this formality was concluded, Lachmon surprised a good many by choosing to retain the post of *Voorzitter* (Chairman or Speaker), turning down an offer of the presidency made by the NPS. But he was still clearly the boss. One could draw no other conclusion when he proposed a respected, but clearly nonpolitical, agricultural engineer, Ramsewak Shankar, for the presidency. The choice was accepted without a murmur of protest by the NPS and KTPI.

The idea of picking a fairly nonpolitical figure like Shankar as President may have seemed like an ingenious stroke to maximize the uncertain authority of the Front government. Shankar was clearly a figurehead compared with Lachmon and Arron (the latter about to become Prime Minister, or Vice President, in the new regime).<sup>1</sup> They were the ones with their hands most directly on the machinery of government and policy-making. With the "strong presidency" now consigned to a weak man, the *Staatsraad* (State Council) might be reduced from a kind of "upper house" to a mere ceremonial council. In fact, the Front delayed in setting up the *Staatsraad* for a year.<sup>2</sup>

All of this constituted a breach of the Leonsberg Agreement made the year before in August, at the start of the referendum and election campaigns. At that time Bouterse and the old party leaders had agreed on a power-sharing arrangement that would give Suriname a nonpartisan government much like the one it had going into the elections. The *Staatsraad* was supposed to carry on the function of the *Topberaad* (which had brought Bouterse, Lachmon, Arron, the unions, and other groups together) in a supervisory function over the executive. The Leonsberg Accord also supported the presidency of Frank Essed, a highly respected development planner and former NPS member, and the continuation of Jules Wijdenbosch as Vice President.

The landslide victory of the Front parties was apparently unexpected; because of its work with the people's committees and other grass-roots groups, the NDP expected more seats in urban areas, and ten seats were felt to be assured in the country's interior, depopulated thanks to the Bush Negro insurgency and thus open for manipulation. But with only three seats overall, the NDP was in no position to press the Front to honor the Leonsberg Accord.

The justification for power-sharing—the Front falling short of two-thirds control in the National Assembly (needed for election of the President and for changing the constitution)—did not obtain. Thus, the old parties simply cast the Leonsberg Accord aside. But when they did so, the NDP and military prepared for battle.

One issue upset the calm, deliberate approach of the Front: the provision of a ministerial post for the KTPI's leader, Willy Soemita. As pointed out in Chapter 2, Soemita had been arrested for "blatant" (as opposed to the more common "well-disguised") corruption. As an ex-convict, his presence in the new government seemed an embarrassment, at least to many NPS members. But there was no desire to repeat the events of 1978 and risk defection by the KTPI. Thus Soemita became not only Minister of Social Affairs but also Deputy Vice President (backing up Arron).

A second issue of some sensitivity was the selection of a new Minister of Defense with the responsibility of watching over the armed forces and Desi Bouterse. Lachmon and Arron finessed this nicely by putting a non-Front, non-Bouterse man in the role—Captain Achmed Sheikhkariem. Captain Sheikhkariem's rank was probably as irrelevant as his present civilian authority. But his knowledge of the military, stemming from his service before the coup, might be useful for oversight purposes. Captain Sheikhkariem aside, the parties divided their posts five each for the VHP and NPS, and two for the KTPI. Bouterse reportedly spent four hours with Shankar before giving the NDP approval to support him. However, in a promising show of *verzoening*, both Shankar and Arron were given a unanimous vote of support in the National Assembly. Just the same, to show that he still had a few opinions of his own and the readiness to utter them, Bouterse gave the Dutch government a tongue-lashing for its continued "violation of international law" and "support for international terrorism and mercenary war."

The past and the present, however, were both quick to press in on the new government. Within days of the inauguration, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights presented a report condemning the military for the atrocities at Moengo Tapoe and elsewhere between July and December 1986. On New Year's Day 1988, yet another group of Bush Negro noncombatants had been captured and executed near the Saramakaner village of Pokigron on the shores of the Brokopondo Lake, site of another attack three months earlier. One member of the group miraculously survived to implicate his killers—allegedly a unit of the National Army. Both the Dutch and the Americans denounced this latest atrocity, throwing the new government a stiff challenge even before it was formally inaugurated. The Military Police launched an investigation, promising that justice would be done if the men implicated were found to be guilty.

## THE DUTCH AID IMBROGLIO

An offer by Dutch Premier Ruud Lubbers to mediate the conflict between Brunswijk and the Paramaribo authorities was flatly turned down by Bouterse, whereupon the Dutch began to show ever greater caution in the restoration of their development aid. Talks on this subject, they declared, would have to wait until the new government had presented its governmental program (*Regeringsverklaring*) to the National Assembly. At that time (March 12), Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek declared himself pleased with the program, authorized restoration of full diplomatic relations, and prepared to initiate negotiations over renewed aid in May. The aid stream, however, was *not* turned back on, apart from the humanitarian trickle begun in 1986.

Former Development Minister Jan Pronk stated that development aid would have to be "for the benefit of all Surinamers," implying that the civil war must end and refugees be returned to the interior before externally funded development could be considered. Even then, the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* made it clear that no aid monies would be given to military-related programs. In what can only be considered angry retaliation, arsonists tried to burn down the KLM office in downtown Paramaribo, and when Foreign Minister Van den Broek arrived for talks in March 1988, nails were scattered in the path of his car. But two could play at that game. During the visit of Development Minister Bukman in May, arsonists burned down the headquarters of the military police on the grounds of Fort Zeelandia. If democracy was back, so were some of Suriname's more anarchic traditions.

Negotiations were complicated by Dutch demands for restructuring the CONS mechanism that approved the development projects to be supported. Rather than a fixed group of designated individuals from each country (with the capacity to become too cozy with one another and autonomous as a group), a rotation of accountable experts was called for on each side. Internationalization of the aid was also specified, in particular to provide the manpower Suriname evidently lacked to put together proper development plans. Arron denounced the internationalization idea as a Dutch attempt to escape their treaty obligations. Instead, he demanded \$275 million at the earliest opportunity for an *urgentieprogramma* of economic recovery. In addition, he demanded \$90 million compensation for the CONS-supported development projects that Suriname had carried to completion *after* the Dutch aid cutoff in December 1982. Bukman flatly refused to discuss the latter two issues and held to his conditions regarding the CONS. After several days of unyielding confrontation, the Dutch negotiators flew home. According to the *NRC-Handelsblad*, the Surinamers ended up with pledges for less than \$20 million—largely for food, medicine, and spare parts.

Sorting through the wreckage, Arron defended his government's stance. "They wanted us to forgo any major development and settle for small

projects," he said, "like manufacturing matches and toothpicks." But union leaders and businessmen accused the Surinamese negotiators of very sloppy work and having thrown their *urgentieprogramma* together without consulting anyone. In the editorial opinion of the *NRC-Handelsblad*, it seemed quite incredible that a \$275 million program could be drawn up on "two sheets of paper."<sup>3</sup> An Salomonson, of that paper, reported that Finance Minister Subhas Mungra had been willing to accept the Dutch conditions, but that Arron had roundly rejected them.

First of all, because acceptance of unpopular measures such as these would put him politically into some danger [in his party]. Second, because the military commander, Desi Bouterse, would have nothing to do with them. And the reality of the Surinamese "democracy," unfortunately, is that the army is not under the control of the government; rather, the government rules by grace of the military.<sup>4</sup>

Bukman announced that there was still Nf 100 million in aid monies available for 1988, and it would not be tied to any internationalization requirements. Still, he urged the Surinamers to consider approaching the World Bank, if only for help in drawing up sensible development plans, given the lack of trained professional help in the country itself. Again in July the two parties negotiated and reached agreement in principle on aid flows of Nf 100 million for 1988, and Nf 200 million for each succeeding year to 1996 (roughly \$50 million and \$100 million, respectively). But there were three more conditions: Suriname must adopt some austerity measures (an *aanpassingsbeleid*, or adjustment policy) by October 1; it must submit a comprehensive, multi-year development plan (*meerjarenontwikkelingsprogramma*, MOP); and it must allow purchases to be handled by the Dutch Government Services Administration (*Rijksinkoopbureau*, RIB) to assure proper accountability.

Although internationalization was now dropped, it was still pointed out that the World Bank's experts could help by suggesting ways of applying the "austerity knife." All cuts would be painful, however. Inflation in 1987 was reported at 50 percent, unemployment as of October 1988 was 38 percent, over half of the economically active population was in government employ, and reserves had dropped to less than \$6 million in 1987. Hit by the perennial shortage of medical supplies, the Academic Hospital announced that it would close in November 1988—a drastic step that suddenly unlocked enough foreign exchange pledges by the government to reverse the decision. School uniforms and supplies for the 1988-89 school year were held up by the Ministry of Education's inability to take shipment.

The Nf 100 million in aid for 1988 were considered bridging funds (*overbruggingshulp*), according to Bukman, and would be counted separately from the treaty's promised development aid. But there were still two devilish conditions to be met: Suriname would have to solve the civil war, and it

would have to take the aid in goods and services, not in cash. Regarding the first condition, long-range (i.e., MOP) funding would still be conditioned upon its benefiting everyone, and there was no way the government could do this short of achieving peace with, or victory over, the Jungle Commando.

The second issue involved the role of the Dutch RIB in the monitoring of all imports to Suriname under the bridging aid program. There would be no more blank checks drawn by the CONS on the Dutch Treasury. Aid would henceforth be calculated in goods and services, the former handled by the RIB. A sign of the coming difficulties this would impose arose in relation to the first food orders under the bridging fund's program. Among the foods on the shopping list that the Arron government presented for emergency aid were sardines and Gouda cheese. While these might be basic to the Dutch diet, they were viewed as somehow extravagant for their former subjects. But Lachmon responded that it had been a long time since his countrymen had enjoyed such basic Dutch treats. They were necessary, he thought, to give people hope for the future. Such items *were* available through EA trade, but only at exorbitant prices. To make them available at or below cost (through the bridging aid) might help to tamp down inflation as well as to pick up spirits.

Many, of course, benefited from the Nf 70 million worth of food parcels arriving in Suriname each year from family members in The Netherlands. But as Minister Mungra pointed out, 90 percent of the local economy was considered "black," so it was going to take more than a few thousand wheels of Gouda and cans of sardines to rein in inflation. Despite the continuing disputes over conditionalities, the slide of the Surinamese guilder on the black market was temporarily reversed on news of the aid accord and of an \$11.4 million grant from the Common Market for several agricultural projects and to improve the coastal highway between Coronie and Nieuw Nickerie.

Among the issues complicating relations between Suriname and The Netherlands was the fate of political refugees. Tens of thousands of Surinamers had fled their country to the shelter of The Netherlands in the 1980s. With the return of democracy in 1987, the question arose whether sanctuary was still necessary. Who could be at risk if the rule of law was fully restored? The Dutch Minister of Justice determined that there was *no* risk and ordered expulsion of all those who had entered the country without proper visas. His action was quickly blocked, however, by a Dutch judge who questioned whether Bouterse and his men might still be in a position to exact revenge on avowed enemies when they returned.

Eddy Sedoc, Suriname's Minister of Foreign Affairs, joined the issue with a novel twist in support of the courts—and the asylum seekers. "Don't send them to us," he warned. "We will be in no position to absorb them economically until our development is in full swing again!" Worries about safety were heightened in November 1988, when to the horror of the Dutch and Surinamers alike, a Hindustani male, returning to Suriname from Holland,

hanged himself in a military jail cell after being taken into custody on his arrival when his papers were allegedly found not to be in order. The two issues seemed related: if return migration was not yet safe, could Dutch aid be rendered properly?

## TRYING TO END THE WAR

A lot was riding, then, upon efforts to end the Bush Negro uprising. And this is where the greatest division lay between the civilian authorities and the men in the barracks. There was no substitute for victory, Bouterse claimed, since the enemy consisted of terrorists, mercenaries, and traitors to the homeland. "You don't negotiate with terrorists," military spokesmen repeated again and again. Other than expressing their desire for an end to the conflict, Front leaders took no public position on negotiations, standing aside as the CCK launched exploratory talks with the Jungle Commando (JC) in French Guiana and later at JC headquarters in Langatabiki on the upper Marowijne. In The Netherlands, Chin A Sen's *Bevrijdingsraad* attacked the Arron government for its aloof attitude. But, until a deal could be struck that the government would support, it was just as well that the CCK, not the government, did the exploring *and* served as the lightning rod for Bouterse's wrath.

After the second Pokigron incident, the JC announced it was terminating its unilateral cease-fire. Then, when it became clear that neither the army nor the government was inclined to rush into negotiations, it launched an offensive in the Patamaka area (site of an extensive palm oil plantation), south of Moengo. With the JC dominant in small skirmishes, Bouterse determined to launch a full offensive to drive the guerrillas away from Patamaka. Heavy fighting was reported between June and August, but the JC was able to avoid any direct confrontation, hitting new targets in the Brokopondo area. Willebrord Nieuwenhuis reported in September 1988 that the Bush Negro determination to keep the struggle going was a function of their fear that the spirits of the dead (the victims in this civil war) would force them back into slavery if they were not properly avenged.<sup>5</sup> By now, Surinamers were beginning to reconcile themselves to a stalemate. Would this cost Suriname its development aid—indeed, its very development?

The civilian authorities appeared to be transfixed. If their game plan was to keep the National Army at bay so that they could take decisive actions, where were the decisive actions? Badrissein Sital complained bitterly that "every day Arron breaks the constitution" (by refusing to set the machinery in motion to create the *Staatsraad* and the local governing councils). Indeed, the government chipped away at the military's influence—removing military appointees from the ministries, cutting back the financial powers of the

military, and boycotting military celebrations of the February coup. Lachmon nevertheless spoke on several occasions in defense of the military, offering his congratulations for their cooperation in the redemocratization process.

By November, the Front finally yielded on the issue of the *Staatsraad* and presented a bill to constitute that body. Major legislation (e.g., the long-awaited development program), like the constitutional amendments, required the State Council's advisory opinion, and the Front's tactic of holding up its creation risked jeopardizing the government's image as constitutionally law-abiding. The constitution, however, said nothing about the Council's composition, apart from guaranteeing its initial (1987) seats to the army, employers, and unions (the members of Bouterse's *Topberaad*). Downplaying this functional representation in favor of political parties, the Front passed enabling legislation that gave only one seat to the military, one to the employers, and two to the unions. Ten seats were reserved for representatives of the National Assembly, awarded proportionally. This meant seven seats for the Front, and one each for NDP, PALU, and PL. Even if all the other members of the *Staatsraad* were to vote against the Front, the outcome would be a 7-7 tie, with the President holding the tie-breaking vote. Derby and Bouterse were furious.

Because of the strains of insurgency and the spillover effects of distrust and discrimination that fell to Bush Negroes in the south-central part of the country, Brunswijk's appeal began to fail there. A human rights organization, Mooiwana 86, organized by Bush Negro activist Stanley Rensch, claimed that 25,000 Bush Negroes (mostly Saramakaners) were being starved. Unable to make it through the jungles to safety in French Guiana, Saramakaners and Matawais began to gravitate to a more neutral or even (in the case of the Matawais) pro-Bouterse position. In Pokigron, for example, where National Army troops had killed a group of Saramakaners on New Year's Day, 1988, mistaking them for guerrillas, the Army and Government had done their best to make amends. By the start of 1989, the residents of Pokigron were so solidly in the anti-Brunswijk camp that the Jungle Commando raided it in April and burned fifty houses. Located just above the Afobaka Dam, Pokigron was seen by both sides as a strategic point. The dam itself was the real prize, of course. In June, a Jungle Commando unit led by a Bush Negro called Barabas seized the dam and opened one of its floodgates. They told a group of Suralco workers, whose bus they had captured earlier in the day, that they were angry at the delays in the peace talks.

Lachmon and his colleagues were caught in a dangerous swirl of multiple conflicts. Despite the considerable leverage that Dutch aid represented, it was not easily utilized by the Front. The government reminded one of a long dugout canoe one sees on the Surinamese rivers. But in this one the crew was poling their cargo upstream through the most treacherous rapids at high tide. It was looking rather doubtful that they would reach their destination.

## KOUROU AND THE TUCAYANAS

President Shankar called for a general amnesty for civil war-related violence in his 1989 New Year's address. The National Assembly passed such a law in April but excluded cases involving human rights violations (summary executions, torture, etc.). This exclusion provoked an angry response by Bouterse (whose men had the most to lose under such a law). "This is going to cause turbulence in my ranks that I won't be able to control," he warned. As if to demonstrate his "slipping control," military police broke into a jail in Tammenga in April to free one of two *volksmilitia* members arrested in connection with the Mooi Wana killings in 1986. Even greater "turbulence" was promised if there were a cease-fire with the rebels. But now the initiative in negotiations passed from the CCK to the Front itself.

Members of the Front reportedly had their first talks with representatives of the Jungle Commando at Schiphol Airport (in The Netherlands) in November 1988. These talks were resumed in French Guiana late in February 1989, with some help by the CCK. Hans Buddingh' writes that all efforts came to naught until Lachmon took the lead—and the risks. On June 8, at Portal, an island in the Marowijne River, an accord was signed by Lachmon and Brunswijk calling for an immediate cease-fire, termination of the state of emergency in eastern and southern Suriname (which gave the National Army special powers), provision of appropriate representation for these areas in the government, and extension of aid for resettlement of refugees and reconstruction and development in the affected areas.

Subsequent negotiations over the Jungle Commando's future snagged on Brunswijk's demand that the JC become a unit of the national police, with jurisdiction over the interior. Bouterse was adamantly opposed, urging that Brunswijk's men turn in their arms and go into exile in The Netherlands instead. His representative on the *Staatsraad*, Chas Mijnaals, echoed the point; and President Shankar, obviously feeling the military's pressure, urged that the provision be dropped. Nevertheless, it was included in an accord signed in Kourou, French Guiana, on July 21, 1989, by Brunswijk and a Surinamese government delegation headed by Lachmon and Education Minister Ronald Venetiaan. What about Shankar's opposition, Venetiaan was asked. "It's irrelevant," he answered. "This agreement is a covered check." In other words, with an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly sufficient even to remove the President, the accord was "in the bank."

But Shankar was not the problem. Frank Playfair, floor leader of the NDP, argued that Kourou violated the constitution, effectively breaking the unitary character of the state. This was a "declaration of war on the Surinamese people," he argued. Debate continued for several weeks, until the National Assembly finally voted 44-2, with five abstentions, to accept the

peace treaty. Now the problem was getting Bouterse to honor it. One source of pressure came from across the border in French Guiana, through a visit by a high French military official. His advice to "accept Kourou" was about as weighty as Bouterse would hear. Yet Bouterse's defiance was fierce. Arron and Shankar tried to lure the *Bevel* into cooperation by promising further talks and guarantees. Brunswijk warned against compromise and threatened to attack Paramaribo if the army attempted a coup. Provoking Bouterse just a little further, the legislature lifted the state of emergency (imposed at the height of the guerrilla insurgency in December 1986).

The jungle peace did not last long. Within hours of the Assembly's action to lift the state of emergency, a group identified as Amerindians hijacked a ferryboat and an airplane in western Suriname.<sup>6</sup> They called themselves the *Tucayana Amazone Indianen* (Tucayana Amazon Indians), and their manifesto, quickly delivered to the media, explained their action as a protest against the Kourou Accord. If Jungle Commando "police" were going to be stationed throughout the interior, this would take away the Amerindians' autonomy. The manifesto demanded abrogation of the accord and its thorough renegotiation to take these concerns into account. As journalists and politicians turned their attention to these other jungle inhabitants, still other grievances came out. The Amerindians were always being taken for granted, they said, whether it was on the coast (where their hunting and fishing grounds in Galibi were encroached upon) or the interior. Development of western Suriname had ignored the fate of Amerindians living nearby (in Apura and other villages), and they resented being confined *de facto* to reservations that disrupted their traditional life-style and gave them little in return.<sup>7</sup>

Just who were these Indians? The word "Tucayana" is not mentioned as an ethnic category in the literature. The *Encyclopedie van Suriname* uses the term to describe a particular kind of priest or seer.<sup>8</sup> In all probability, the term was chosen as an integrative device to reduce the fragmentation among Carib, Arawak, and other tribal groups. More relevant, perhaps, is the background of the Tucayana leadership. According to Henck Arron, they included former members of the *volksmilitia* and Delta Force, a crack unit of uniformed soldiers whose special assignment had been jungle warfare against the rebels.<sup>9</sup> No wonder that, as civilians, they might be worried about Jungle Commando police in their territory! Bouterse's subsequent protestations of innocence regarding his having set up this new insurgency might technically have been correct. But where did the Tucayanas' impressive arsenal of weapons come from? Even before the uprising, human rights activist Stanley Rensch had warned that the military was arming the Amerindians.<sup>10</sup>

The Amerindians' capacity for mischief seemed considerable. A few days after the first hijackings, they commandeered a 500-ton ship in the Nickerie River. And if the Jungle Commando had closed the eastern interior of Suriname to economic activity, the Tucayanas closed it in the west.

Hindustani lumbering companies had their equipment confiscated or were told to pay exorbitant fees to carry out their activities. Truckers and other motorists venturing along the road to the site of the (largely dormant) West Suriname Project had their vehicles (and cargoes) taken. Another ferry was captured late in October on the Coppename River. Then, at the mouth of the Marowijne River in eastern Suriname, Tucayanas attacked a group of fishing boats, striking at another economic enterprise over which they demanded some say.

Among the Tucayanas' demands were talks with Lachmon and Bouterse. Lachmon saw no difficulty in this and asked them to identify their leader. "If the Indians can prove to me that their interests have been damaged by the Kourou Accord," Lachmon said, "I am ready to correct any possible shortcomings and to make a separate agreement with them."<sup>11</sup> But the Tucayanas had second thoughts and postponed the talks. Brunswijk, in the meantime, vowed to serve the interests of both Amerindians and Bush Negroes under terms of the Kourou Accord. "We've both been held back," he said.

At a press conference in the Indian village of Bigi Poika, near the Zanderij airfield, the Tucayanas' leader, Commander "Ebe" Thomas Sabajo reiterated the group's demands. His demand that the Jungle Commando members be punished as "terrorists" was greeted with some irony by Bush Negroes who recognized Thomas as one of the soldiers taking part in the Mooi Wana massacre in December 1986. Nevertheless, closure of the western frontier had to be taken seriously, whoever was behind it. In October 1989, Lachmon offered to meet with Thomas. At their meeting, the Amerindian leader demanded a development policy for the interior, disarmament of the Jungle Commando, and replacement of the present government by "a national government," presumably one that included Amerindians and the military. Lachmon was not persuaded. The only concession he was willing to offer was a national referendum on the Kourou Accord. Thomas rejected that proposal as "a conscious attempt to set the majority against an oppressed minority."<sup>12</sup>

As Willy Soemita later put it, rebel groups now began to spring out of the ground like mushrooms. A group calling itself the *Unie Voor Nationale Bevrijding en Democratie* (Union for National Liberation and Democracy) moved in to take over Moengo in October 1989. Allegedly a breakaway group from the Jungle Commando, the *Unie* explained that it had taken this action to defend Moengo against the Tucayanas, the National Army, and the Jungle Commando. Apparently with the help of an airlift from the National Army to their base outside of Albina, the Tucayanas were able to launch an attack on Moengo late in October, but the *Unie* managed to repulse it. Control over Moengo would alternate between the *Unie* and the Front government for the next six months. In the process, bauxite mining often ground to a halt. If the various guerrilla groups were out to control Suriname's resources and hold economic development hostage, they certainly were succeeding.

Brunswijk now declared that he had "no trust any more in a national accord" (Kourou). A survey of the 6,600 Bush Negro refugees in French Guiana indicated that only 37 percent were willing to return to their homes.<sup>13</sup> Seeing the prospect for more war, Bouterse called for direct talks, calculating that perhaps he could come to some sort of understanding with Brunswijk. It was an amazing demonstration of the paralysis of the civilian government that Bouterse, by default, could take the lead in negotiations. To everyone's surprise, he found Brunswijk willing to deal. In a scene worthy of a Hollywood film, the two "commanders" rendezvoused in November, at the confluence of the Cottica and Commewijne rivers near Moengo. Pictures of them talking amicably on Bouterse's speedboat were viewed with amazement in Paramaribo. Could they actually bury the hatchet so easily? Whatever the answer, yet another national anniversary (the fourteenth anniversary of independence) had been accompanied by a symbolic *verzoening*. Bouterse's knack for showmanship could not be denied.

Brunswijk may have paid dearly for this gesture. The *Unie*, to show its opposition to any reconciliation with the military, led a series of raids in the Afobaka Dam area—against health workers in the village of Brokopondo, a busload of Suralco workers near Victoria, and the military post at Kraka, all to the south of the Zanderij airport. In the latter incident, seven soldiers were killed and six seriously wounded. Because reports indicated that white mercenaries were involved, President Shankar gave the National Army authority to counterattack. Demonstrating that he still could command obedience, Ronnie Brunswijk called the Brokopondo unit back to Moengo and reprimanded them for exceeding their instructions.<sup>14</sup> Two of his lieutenants, Barabas and Papato, were placed under arrest for having their own private meeting with Bouterse without the JC's authorization.

Doubts as to the government's willingness to stand by the Kourou Accord—as well, of course, as the continued state (or states) of war—had led Brunswijk to seek new shipments of weapons from abroad. Trying to juggle these new antagonists into a new, more complicated equilibrium, Lachmon traveled to Moengo for talks with both the *Unie* and the JC. He tried to assure them that a satisfactory compromise could be found to keep Kourou basically intact. But they insisted that the military be prosecuted for their killings and alleged drug-dealing. Lachmon was noncommittal, but agreed to try again to bring all parties together for roundtable discussions. With this, the *Unie* gave up its occupation of Moengo and lifted its blockade of the roads there.<sup>15</sup>

## CAN THE CENTER HOLD?

Life in Paramaribo was, surprisingly, unaffected by these events. Apart from those families (mostly Creole) whose sons had been called up for military

duty, and those occasional moments where military action near the dam produced a power blackout, the guerrilla war could have been on another continent. This clearly was not the situation for those living in the frontier areas of Albina (almost totally destroyed), Moengo (periodically blockaded), the Patamaka and Victoria plantations (seized and looted), and now the southwest region (sealed off by the Tucayanas). But this left over three-quarters of the population "in the rear," so to speak. What was happening there?

For one thing, morale was dropping fast. RAVAKSUR, the umbrella organization of union confederations, declared a daylong general strike in May 1989 to show dissatisfaction with the government's inability (1) to work things out with the Dutch, (2) to control the black market, and (3) to rein in the army. When the Kourou Accord was announced, the unions fell out among themselves, Derby initially opposing it, the others quickly overriding him. Derby continued to press for a "national dialogue"—not just with the combatants in the interior but with all interested political groups. Such a dialogue might have taken place in the *Staatsraad*, but as the *NRC-Handelsblad* pointed out in August 1989, the unions, miffed at the single seat allotted them, still had not appointed their representative. In Derby's view, it was an illegitimate body.

On his own initiative, President Shankar accepted the unions' proposal of a national dialogue, inviting representatives of the political parties and functional groups to the Presidential Palace for talks. Derby used the occasion to restate his opposition to the Kourou Accord. He also insisted on a new national government—one that included the military and the unions. But, apart from the reiteration of positions already well established, nothing of substance—certainly no new agreements—came forth.

Economic conditions continued to deteriorate. One of the latest, and most shocking, measurements of this was the crash of one of Suriname Airways' two DC8 passenger planes. The jet crashed near the Zanderij airport in a heavy fog, on June 7, 1989; 176 of those on board, including an all-star soccer team, lost their lives. Later reports indicated that more lives might have been saved had equipment been summoned more rapidly to the scene, and the rescuers not been more interested in looting the site.<sup>16</sup> Financial scandals had plagued Suriname Airways' operations over the years, and its current director, Atta Mungra, had been fighting to save his job for almost a year against similar charges. The crash investigation revealed dangerous cost-cutting methods. The control tower's guidance system was not working, and members of the crew, including the pilot, were beyond retirement age and working at below scale. For these and other reasons, Mungra finally resigned in October 1989. Andre Haakmat compared the lost DC8 with the Shankar Government: both had lost their bearings with disastrous consequences.<sup>17</sup>

Indications of another sort of scandal grew in the late 1980s, as more and

more drug shipments to The Netherlands revealed Suriname as the transshipment point in the Americas. In February 1989, Dutch authorities reported having intercepted ten cocaine deliveries from Suriname in the preceding three months. Some (token?) drug enforcement took place in Suriname itself, as cargoes from Colombia, Bolivia, and Brazil were seized. In April, the head of the drug enforcement office in Paramaribo from 1979 to 1987 was arrested. Someone locally was not pleased. As a number of Colombian, Bolivian, and Surinamese were brought to trial for drug-dealing, the presiding judge's house was bombed. The incident did not prevent harsh sentences for all the defendants.

How deeply was the military involved in all this? Their control over the many airstrips in the south and southwest, together with the customs offices at the international airport at Zanderij and in the country's harbors, gave them an excellent chance to offer transit services to drug producers. But, aside from the Boerenveen case, Dutch and American authorities found little that was judiciable and could point only to "port of origin" indications. However, in December 1989, after the murder of four Brazilian drug dealers and seizure of a 10,000-kilogram shipment of cocaine in The Netherlands, police authorities organized an intensive search for Roy Tolud, one of Bouterse's sixteen commandos, who was believed to be involved.

About one-third of the narcotics arriving in Holland was thought to originate in Suriname.<sup>18</sup> Yet Dutch-Surinamese cooperation in criminal investigations had been suspended after the killings in 1982. Restoration of collaboration should have followed the return to democratic government; yet the Dutch suspected that shared information would be abused, especially by the military police, empowered as they were with general *opsporingsbevoegdheid* (investigative powers) by virtue of a government decree issued in February 1985.

Dutch aid, in general, remained on hold through 1989, thanks to the Arron/Shankar government's unwillingness or inability to meet its various conditions. The consequences were difficult for many, despite the EA and other schemes. As Leo Morpurgo pointed out, Suriname needed roughly \$20 million a month for the importation of essential goods.<sup>19</sup> Exports brought in only around \$9 million. Financing the EA trade, which the Central Bank estimated at almost \$40 million in 1988, required a steady siphoning off of foreign currency by the country's exporters in defiance of Suriname's currency controls. Still another EA source was the laundered profits from the drug trade.

Late in 1989, a wave of criminal behavior broke out, with drive-by shootings at police stations, armed robberies along the Zanderij road, and destruction of a courthouse by arson. These events provoked a roundup of suspects (mostly Amerindian) by the police, and in apparent retaliation, a policeman was assassinated in Paranam in December. Arson destroyed three

old colonial residences located behind an aggressive anti-Bouterse news agency when fire grenades launched at the agency went astray. Automatic rifle fire directed at his residence prompted Stanley Rensch, the Bush Negro human rights activist, to flee the country. Over the New Year's holidays, a grenade was hurled at the home of Finance Minister Subhas Mungra (without causing any damage). Then, at the end of January 1990, the top floor of the *Staatsraad* building (where important judicial records were stored) was destroyed by a fire grenade attack, as was the Ministry of Economic Affairs a few months later.

### MONKEY IN THE CATBIRD SEAT

In December 1989, a group of Amerindians from Bernharddorp who had worked on the West Suriname Project or derived their living from traffic along the Apura road got into a fight with the Amerindians involved in the Tucayana movement, presumably to get their fair share of the revenues involved in the traffic (of drugs?) through their area. The Tucayanas, backed by the National Army, killed or captured most of them. Those who were captured were taken to Fort Zeelandia in Paramaribo for questioning. Four of the leaders were later flown to Apura, presumably to gather evidence, where allegedly they were executed. Whatever the truth of this story, a group of Amerindian women commenced a sit-in demonstration on February 3, 1990, under the *Mamabon* (Mother Tree) across the street from the National Assembly, demanding release of the prisoners and/or information about them. They maintained their demonstration/encampment for over four months. Because everyone in power turned a deaf ear to the protesters, their highly visible plight brought shame and discredit to *both* the Shankar government and the military.

It was interesting to hear Surinamers talking about the way President Harry Truman had fired General Douglas MacArthur for insubordination during the Korean War in 1951. Certainly Bouterse's insubordination was more confident and blatant now than it had been in the first years of democratic rule. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the coup, he pulled out more stops than one would have thought imaginable. Before a crowd estimated at 10,000, he managed to lure *both* Brunswijk and Thomas onto the stage of his celebration. He vigorously condemned the United States for the "interference" of its energetic ambassador, Richard Howland, and told President Shankar, "Your ship is sinking." More ominously, he warned that if the government tried to devalue the Surinamese currency, the military would refuse to defend it against the predictable fury of the public.<sup>20</sup>

The Shankar government took the Brunswijk/Thomas/Bouterse meeting as a sign that an overall accord might be possible, and it called for a new peace conference. But, curiously, the Tucayanas refused to participate. As

long as the *Mamabon* demonstration continued, they said, they did not feel safe in Paramaribo. Shankar decided to hold the conference without them. Television pictures showed the Presidential Palace ballroom packed with representatives of the various Amerindian and Bush Negro tribes, as well as of the Jungle Commando and the Front. It seemed highly unlikely that a group this size could produce a well-tailored accord. But whatever Shankar had in mind, the course of negotiations was derailed at the end of the second day with the arrest of Brunswijk and his men by Bouterse and the military police.

Brunswijk had arrived in Paramaribo with news that his men had seized a small plane loaded with 1,000 kilograms of cocaine. It had missed the landing strip in Apura, he said, and landed in Moengo by mistake—an error of some 500 kilometers. Four passengers, all Colombian, were arrested, and the cocaine was seized, as was the plane. The implication of this sensational story was that here, finally, was proof that Bouterse was permitting the Medellín cartel to use Surinamese airspace (and landing strips) for the transshipment of drugs to Europe and elsewhere. Yet the details of the story were odd: there was excellent visibility on the day of the alleged flight, and the flight error was too great. Also arousing suspicion was the follow-up news that the four Colombians managed to escape shortly after their arrest. (The only verification of any part of the story was the supervised destruction of the drugs in the presence of the ambassadorial corps in April.)

One day after Brunswijk made his dramatic announcement, he was invited to Bouterse's military headquarters for private talks. When he and his advisers—and bodyguards—arrived, Bouterse placed them under arrest. The two bodyguards resisted and were killed. Fortunately, a policeman at the scene was able to escape and notify President Shankar, who immediately demanded that Bouterse let the prisoners go. When Bouterse did not immediately comply, many began to fear that Brunswijk would meet the same fate that the Bernharddorp Amerindian leaders allegedly had met. A day later it was reported that Brunswijk had been freed.

Bouterse explained his action in terms of the drugs Brunswijk said he had. "We wanted to question him," he said, "to get to the bottom of it. And besides, we have the authority to take such action by virtue of the Military Police's investigative authority. Regardless of the Constitution's provision extending military decrees for one government term, a number of NPS legislators resolved to strip the 400-man military police force of this power. The ECHO news agency in Paramaribo quoted a reliable source in the Front that the VHP was strongly opposed to such an action, stirring rumors that the VHP might leave the Front to form an alliance with the military and the NDP. In any event, Bouterse warned that without the military police at their side, the civilian police would be helpless in the fight against crime. The Front ignored this veiled threat and rescinded the decree in a lively National Assembly

meeting in April.

As if in response, the Pandora's box of fanciful threats opened wider in May, when a group calling itself Angula Mandela attacked a Jungle Commando group near the Afobaka Dam. Angula Mandela claimed to speak for the Saramaka and Matawai groups who felt they were being made to pay an unnecessarily high price for the Jungle Commando's struggle. The leaders were former members of the JC. But unlike the *Unie*, they were clearly on Bouterse's side.

As the situation grew more complicated at the dam, Bouterse launched a campaign in the Moengo area in open defiance of his civilian superiors, Shankar and Arron. Curiously, Shankar flew off to Paraguay in the midst of the Moengo siege, to attend an OAS meeting in Asuncion. It was not all pomp and circumstance, however. Shankar appealed to the OAS to devise ways to assist countries like his that were struggling to develop and redemocratize at the same time. Nevertheless, his abandonment of his post at this time won little favor among Surinamese opinion makers; and his speech, appearing to some like a call for foreign intervention, though actually an amorphous invitation for discussion, produced confusion and dismay.

Rather than fight a pitched battle at Moengo, the JC decided to abandon the bauxite city. Before they left, however, they mined roads and blew up several harbor facilities and the Suralco offices. Bouterse's forces chased Brunswijk into the forest, skirmishing with him all along the road from Moengo to Patamaka and on to Langatabiki. Finally, in September 1990, the military reached Langatabiki, home of the Paramakaners and their pro-Brunswijk chief, *Granman* Forster. Here, it seems, things came to their rest. Brunswijk had been forced further upriver to Stoelman's Island, in Djuka country. There were no roads and a number of rapids between Langatabiki and Stoelman's Island, so the military had the means, logistically, to bottle up Brunswijk. The possibilities for resuming economic activity in the northern part of eastern Suriname were a little better.

## ONCE AGAIN, THE DUTCH CONNECTION

At the start of the siege of Moengo, Ronnie Brunswijk surprised everyone by saying he had decided to call it quits. Shortly thereafter, he was arrested in French Guiana for carrying a false passport. Somehow he was permitted to fly to Paris, where he asked for a visa to go to The Netherlands. The Dutch government responded that it was not interested in talking with him. Still, he somehow managed to get to The Hague and have talks with a number of people. These, it seemed, led him to change his mind about abandoning the cause. While things were very bad in eastern Suriname, he said, morale was good among his troops. He returned to take command in mid-July 1990.

(This bizarre episode reminds one of the antics that often accompany contract renegotiations in professional sports or television.) New peace negotiations began a few weeks later in Cayenne, but no one was holding their breath.

With the removal of the military police's investigative authority, the way was open for Dutch-Surinamese police collaboration in drug and other criminal matters—something that had been suspended following the December killings of 1982. Connivance of the military police (still in control of the customs procedures in the harbor and at the airport) was felt to be important in this traffic, but so was the military's ability to rendezvous offshore with Brazilian and other oceangoing vessels.

Despite logic directing one's attention to the National Army as the principal source of drug-running in the country, logic also suggested a similar, though perhaps reduced, ability on the Jungle Commando's part. It still controlled several airstrips in the interior, and it still managed to keep reasonably well armed and manned to carry on the struggle. Such, at least, were the arguments of Badrissen Sital to the press in shunting aside questions about the army's involvement. But if drugs could come into Suriname to these airstrips, how could they leave for transatlantic destinations? What did the JC control that was the equivalent of an international airport and harbor? Easy, Sital answered. They had French Guiana.<sup>21</sup> The French may have found this a preposterous answer, but Suriname's eastern neighbor is a lightly populated country with porous borders and a variety of connections to the outside world. Were the Dutch and French abetting the Jungle Commando by closing their eyes to drug-trafficking as the price to pay for a "greater good"?

What effect did any of this have on the Dutch aid situation? In May, Jan Pronk, Minister of Development Cooperation, declared his dissatisfaction with the absence of a long-term development plan. "Suriname is stricken with lethargy, spiritual impassivity, indifference, and inactivity," he said. Minister Pronk followed up his sharp criticisms with a dramatic visit to Suriname in July 1990. In meeting after meeting, he was attacked for his allegedly rigid and constantly expanding conditions for the full restoration of aid. Yet, on his return to The Netherlands, he told newsmen that—off the record—most Surinamese business and political leaders agreed with his assessment of the country's malaise—if not with his strict conditions for curing it.

## **ANOTHER BLOOD FEUD**

Shortly after the Pronk visit, Paramaribo was electrified by the murder of a chief inspector of police outside the entrance to Bouterse's office in near Fort Zeelandia. Denying any military responsibility for this event, Bouterse was not believed by many. The events rapidly leading to the killing—and following it—had all the earmarks of a blood feud.

It started on Friday, August 3, when a military policeman and a police officer got into an argument in a bar. The latter excused himself to make a phone call, and when the military policeman later left the bar, he was immediately arrested by police waiting outside. Details of the dispute or charges placed against the soldier were not released.

Word quickly reached the military, it seems, for within a few hours, a military police van forced a police car off the road outside of town and the policemen were taken into custody. When word reached the military that the arrested military policeman had been wounded "accidentally" while being jailed, another military vehicle was seen outside the police headquarters in the Nieuwe Haven area, emptying round after round of automatic rifle fire into the building's windows and façade. The next day the place was a shambles.

In response to the arrests of his men and the attack on his headquarters, Inspector Herman Goodings went into the military headquarters late Saturday night for talks with Bouterse. An hour or so later, he left the building. Shots were heard shortly thereafter. Curiously, no one seems to have gone to investigate, and it was only sometime the next morning that Inspector Goodings's body was found lying by the monument to war veterans across from the *Bevel's* office.

The police reacted with a combination of outrage and fear. They declared a work stoppage and demonstrated at the National Assembly, demanding that the perpetrators be found and arrested. They barricaded the roads passing all police posts in the city and surrounding areas, to prevent drive-by shootings, such as had occurred in December 1989. Widespread popular support for the police, exhibited by huge crowds swelling their ranks in their continuing demonstrations, seemed to do little to hearten them. According to *NRC-Handelsblad*, many began to take "extended" (i.e., permanent) leaves to The Netherlands with their families. As the only armed group, presumably, upholding the principles of law and order, they seemed to be in a perennially losing struggle.

As this is written, over two years later, there has still been no resolution to the Goodings matter. Two purported witnesses have disappeared, forensic tests have not been reported, and further explanations for the initial arrest and subsequent violence have not been forthcoming.

## **THE MILITARY'S BACK!**

After several months of quiet demoralization in which slumping political and economic indicators directed more and more Surinamers to the visa lines outside the Dutch and U.S. consulates, the country finally lurched into an interesting new coup and government. As President Shankar prepared for a trip to consult with the Dutch Parliament and government, Commander

Bouterse decided to go along. There was a slight hitch: Bouterse was *persona non grata* in The Netherlands and was denied a visa. Still, he decided to go, planning to change planes in Amsterdam to visit his friend in arms, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, the charismatic leader of Ghana.

Bouterse's arrival at Schiphol Airport in The Netherlands caused a minor scandal, as he was kept away from newsmen and forced to wait for his connection in seclusion. On his return from Ghana, he was again denied a visa and barred from meeting the press. This time, he chose to fly to Zurich for a few days. On his third trip through Schiphol, the routine was repeated. He returned to Paramaribo on December 21, telling the press that he had been mortified. Shankar, he said, had done nothing to protest his treatment. In fact, Shankar himself had been humiliated, photographed by the *NRC-Handelsblad* huddled in the rain, waiting for admission to Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers' office. "What kind of government is this?" Bouterse asked. The next day he tendered his resignation as Commander, turning the reins of the military over to his second in command, Iwan Graanoogst.

The incident stunned Paramaribo, and Shankar summoned his entire Cabinet for an emergency meeting to decide what to do. While most of Suriname's Christians were attending services on Christmas Eve, Graanoogst telephoned the Presidential Palace and curtly told the President that he and his minister could go home. This was a coup. The military was taking over. Shankar and the others did as they were told, and the redemocratization of Suriname came, at least temporarily, to a shuddering halt.

Later, Graanoogst told the country that this would only be an interim government, one that would remain completely in the hands of civilians, and that there would be elections within 100 days. The announcement had a differential effect within and outside of the country. Within the country, there was, as in 1980, a feeling that something good might come of this. Things could not get much worse than they had been under Arron and Shankar. The military was, and would remain, a headache for the country, but parting company with the present government was not cause for much lament.

The outside world was quick to judge otherwise. The Netherlands abruptly cut what aid it was providing, as did the United States and Venezuela. An OAS meeting called just before the New Year roundly condemned the events in Suriname, no doubt thinking of the precedent that should be set regarding backsliding elsewhere in Latin America. CARICOM leaders voted to withdraw Suriname's observer status at its meetings, and EEC ministers began to reconsider the development projects they had approved for the country.

From behind the scenes, Bouterse picked seventy-seven-year-old Johan S. P. Kraag, former Minister of Social Affairs and honorary chairman of the NPS, to be the new President. Kraag was a respected elder statesman with a wide following in the Moravian Church. Bouterse, it seems, had come to

share the earlier view of Lachmon and Arron that the presidency could be kept weak, for the more critical post of Vice President—and first minister of the Cabinet—went to Jules Wijdenbosch, leader of the NDP and Prime Minister of the last Bouterse government before the 1987 elections. Wijdenbosch had penned a lengthy critique of the Shankar/Arron government in May 1990, listing twenty-five domestic policy crises that the Front had failed to handle. One hundred days was clearly insufficient time to make much headway through such a list, but if there were to be any improvement in the NDP's standing at the polls, Wijdenbosch had provided his own measuring stick.

### THE GOLDEN MONKEY WRENCH

With the OAS, Dutch, and other groups lining up as observers, the election campaign was likely to be as open and fair as in 1987. But it would be a difficult one. Front members would have to demonstrate that their failure to achieve more was largely the result of the constant interference of the military, and the military would have to disprove that claim, as well as establish credentials (not yet very convincing) that the NDP and military together could do a better job. It looked like a straight fight. News that Reuben Lie Pauw Sam was reviving the *Volkspartij* did not seem to excite the public very much, and the PALU—also gearing up—was not given much of a chance. Union leader Fred Derby, once so critical of the Front government, made a preelection alliance between his Surinamese Labor Party (SPA) and the Front (now called the New Front). This may have had the effect of assuring voters that Derby's policy ideas would be given a better hearing. It may also have suggested that Derby was simply selling out. Whatever the case, organized labor was now in the New Front's camp...at least on paper.

But a campaign focusing upon policy issues, governmental performance, and military interference was never permitted to develop. Early in February, as the parties were discussing coalitions, platforms, and candidates, the Dutch tossed a very strange monkey wrench into the works. A report was leaked from a Dutch Cabinet meeting suggesting that Foreign Minister Van den Broek and Development Aid Minister Pronk, together with Prime Minister Lubbers and Justice Minister Hirsch Ballin, had proposed creation of a new Dutch Commonwealth (*Gemenebest*) for the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname.

What would this mean? The recolonization of Suriname by Holland? The end of sovereignty? Was this some Machiavellian way of trying to rid Suriname of its military problem? Further reports from The Netherlands were vague as to what concrete steps were being considered, and the "leakers" were quick to make it known that other members of the Dutch Cabinet were opposed to the plan. Nevertheless, Van den Broek *had already discussed the idea* with the United States, the Organization of American States, Venezuela,

France, and Brazil, so it was not just "something that came up in a meeting."<sup>22</sup>

Hinting about such a political change on the eve of an election had both confusing and electrifying consequences. Instead of closely evaluating the policies and performance of incumbents and their rivals, voters were now given a more subjective range of dreams and fears to choose among. One can hardly imagine a more effective means of disrupting the self-determination of a country. But then, Suriname had not enjoyed normal self-determination, and would never do so as long as civilian authority was undermined by the armed forces.

Although details were never forthcoming, proponents of the *Gemenebest* saw it as giving Suriname and The Netherlands a common (and therefore stable) currency, freedom of movement back and forth between the two lands, an overarching justice system that would protect Suriname's human rights, and a more extensive and professional foreign service *and military*. These shared (or coordinated) activities would give the Dutch a greater voice in Surinamese affairs. In particular, in the military area, it might even give Suriname's civilian authorities the basis on which Bouterse and his army could be removed or stripped of their powers. This, according to Andre Haakmat, was the whole idea. By focusing the election exclusively on the military, it became a kind of public referendum on them. Perhaps more dramatically, the Dutch may have wanted to provoke the military into disrupting the elections or canceling them after the fact—whereupon the Dutch (together with the Americans) would have an excuse to invade.<sup>23</sup>

As if to confirm Haakmat's suspicions, a U.S. State Department spokesperson in Washington declared shortly after the elections, "This hemisphere will not tolerate a new military dictatorship." The statement was directed to Suriname's military and was accompanied by a more pointed warning by Luigi Einaudi, the U.S. Ambassador to the OAS.: "If legal procedures are followed and respect is shown for constitutional norms and laws—not only in political but also in criminal matters, such as drugs—then the question of the use of force [by the OAS] may not come up."<sup>24</sup>

Both the NDP and New Front seemed to be caught offguard by the *Gemenebest* trial balloon, and for most of the campaign, they tried to edge around the issue as carefully as they could, indicating only that they would examine any proposal the Dutch might make. To their undoubted frustration, the only significant new party in the race embraced the idea enthusiastically. This was the *Democratisch Alternatief '91* (DA '91), led by Dr. Winston Jessurun. At the core of DA '91 was a group calling itself the *Alternatief Forum*, a multiethnic group of young professionals disillusioned by the failures of the Front.

They were joined by three older, established parties: the (mostly Hindustani) HPP, (predominantly Indonesian) *Pendawalima*, and (mostly Bush

Negro) *Broederschap en Eenheid in de Politiek* (Brotherhood and Unity in Politics). With its multiethnic character, DA '91 sought to reassure voters of its capacity to rule in an evenhanded (i.e., consociational) manner. But were the Forum's young people *experienced* enough to rule? None had been particularly active in politics or government before. As often was the case with new parties, fairly large crowds attended their rallies—partly to check them out, partly to express their alienation from both the New Front and NDP/military forces.

As the campaign wore on, the NDP pulled out all the stops. It certainly helped to have Jules Wijdenbosch as Vice President, presiding over the government ministries, for the NDP was "promising the moon—higher pensions and student grants, unemployment benefits, income-tax cuts, a halving of retail prices and a bargain with Holland...to do away with visa requirements for would-be migrants."<sup>25</sup> Hans Buddingh' wrote that some Surinamers saw Wijdenbosch as a new "Jopie" Pengel, the NPS leader of the 1950s and 1960s. He certainly tried to deliver, virtually emptying the government coffers to prove his party's commitment to the people.<sup>26</sup> As Henck Arron later pointed out, the Kraag/Wijdenbosch government spent Sf 820 million in the first half of 1991, causing a deficit of 360 million, while in the whole of 1990 the deficit was only Sf 206 million.<sup>27</sup> Fred Derby raged at such news: Wijdenbosch, he declared, was "the most dangerous and irresponsible politician the country has ever seen."<sup>28</sup> A *Rekenkamer* report in October 1991 confirmed Arron's and Derby's charges of chaos and irresponsibility in the Kraag/Wijdenbosch government.

The NDP must have been reasonably pleased with their investment. The election outcome was a major embarrassment for the New Front, which saw its share of the popular vote fall from 85 to 55 percent, enough to take only thirty of the National Assembly's fifty-one seats. Their losses, however, were split almost equally between the NDP, which won twelve seats (up dramatically from three in 1987), and the DA '91, with nine seats (see Table 8.1). The New Front's efforts in forming a government and running it were a little more complicated now than in 1987. Besides having the same old challenges (military insubordination, economic chaos, guerrilla war), they now had to find room in the government (and its program) for Derby's SPA *and*, possibly, the DA '91. If the NDP's political artillery had been quadrupled in size, it would certainly help to have the DA '91 on the New Front's side, even if not in the Cabinet.

## CONCLUSION

While it is still too soon to analyze the events of 1991, there is more than enough to puzzle over in the years 1987 to 1990. It is still something of a

**TABLE 8.1**  
**ELECTION RESULTS, 1991: SEATS BY DISTRICT AND PARTY**

Districts	New Front	NDP	DA '91
Paramaribo	10	4	3
Wanica	5	1	1
Nickerie	3	1	1
Coronie	1	1	0
Saramacca	2	1	0
Commewijne	2	1	1
Marowijne	2	1	0
Para	2	1	0
Brokopondo	1	0	2
Sipaliwini	2	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30 a</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9 b</b>

a. NPS, 12; VHP, 9; KTPI, 7; SPA, 2.

b. HPP, 3; PL, 2; BEP, 3; AF, 1.

Source: *De West*, May 27 and June 3, 1991.

mystery as to why the Front government was so paralyzed and ineffective in its first three years in power. The military was clearly an intimidating force before which Lachmon's metaphorical advice of "bending like paddy in the wind" was taken all too literally by those in power. If the *oude rotten* may have tried any number of Machiavellian tricks to discredit and trim the military's sails, the "*jonge rot*" was clearly more than their match.

It was especially baffling, and discouraging, to see civilians so helpless before the military. Had they no sense of their popular authority? Was there no strategy developed in the years of their "exile" to box in the military and/or dismantle it? Arti Jessurun, one of several popular rivals to Arron for leadership within the NPS, compared the civil-military conflict with the story

of Dracula. In an interview with Hans Buddingh', he summarized a climactic moment in that story as follows:

At one point, where the monster comes threateningly toward a little boy, the little boy holds the cross firmly in his hand and Dracula crumples before him. A professional hunter also holds a cross in his hand, but Dracula takes it away from him because the hunter doesn't really believe in its power. The government [of Suriname] looks at itself as just a small group consisting of the President and thirteen ministers....They are still thinking along the lines of the consensus model [i.e., the consociational approach undertaken in the 1960s and violated at great cost in the 1970s]. But you cannot always solve problems by talking. They don't sufficiently realize that we are dealing here with a nasty opponent who has completely different standards.<sup>29</sup>

Applied to Suriname's internal problems, one might think that the Shankar/Arron government, as Jessurun argued, was negotiating with the military from fear. But it might also be that the Front was following Arron's advice (see Chapter 7) "to summon the patience to wait for the right moment to do things." And *that* moment might have to wait until the (New) Front's second term of office.

## NOTES

1. Shankar had been a Cabinet minister in the caretaker government of 1969 and for two years in the Jules Sedney government (1969-73). Thereafter, he had been director of the *Stichting Machinale Landbouw* in Wageningen, and a director of the Agricultural Development Bank.

2. In an interview with Hans Buddingh' in 1989, Lachmon said, "I find the President not the most powerful man in the country. He cannot be as useful as a parliamentary speaker. The latter can more easily cope with dangers and fine-tune behavior." *NRC-Handelsblad*, July 31, 1989.

3. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1988.

4. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1988.

5. *Ibid.*, Sept. 6, 1988.

6. The ferryboat was not only hijacked but hidden from aerial surveillance in the thick rain forest along the Coppename River. Although most passengers were freed, one was killed in the takeover. The pilot of the plane (taken at Washabo, on the Corantijn River) was held captive, and another plane was sent to Paramaribo with a manifesto explaining the action.

7. Interview, Nardo Aluman and Edward Swedo, July 18, 1990.
8. C. F. A. Bruining and J. Voorhoeve, eds., *Encyclopedie van Suriname* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1977), 478, 609.
9. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Sept. 5, 1989. This impression was echoed by the *Staatsraad* which concluded that they were "organized by obviously well-trained groups of people. Ibid., Sept. 4, 1989.
10. Ibid., Aug. 17, 1989.
11. Ibid., Sept. 8, 1989.
12. Ibid., Oct. 13, 1989.
13. Ibid., Oct. 11, 1989.
14. A British mercenary, in fact, was shot and killed during the Moengo meeting.
15. Some counterallegations were made by the National Army regarding Jungle Commando involvement in drug-smuggling (*NRC-Handelsblad*, Apr. 14, 1989). It is possible that both sides had found this nefarious activity their only means of keeping a full war chest.
16. Ibid., June 15, 1989.
17. Ibid., June 19, 1989.
18. Ibid., Mar. 28, 1990. By November 1991, that figure had risen to 60 percent. *Washington Post*, Nov. 4, 1991.
19. *NRC-Handelsblad*, June 7, 1989.
20. Bouterse also took the opportunity to remarry on this date, in a ceremony that was televised around the country and cost a small fortune. Wags noted that the new wife had the same name as the old (Ingrid), and his wedding date was also "easy to remember."
21. Rudi Kagie, "Mofokoranti: De junglecoke in Saint-Laurent is plotseling wel erg goedkoop," *Vrij Nederland*, May 19, 1990.
22. Approval, it seemed, had been given to the plan by all but Brazil.
23. The *NRC-Handelsblad* scoffed at such a suggestion (May 27, 1991), but public debate in The Netherlands over a possible invasion of Suriname became very heated. Ibid., May 28 and 31, June 3-7, 1991.

24. *Ibid.*, May 30 and 31, 1991.

25. *The Economist*, June 8, 1991, 48.

26. *NRC-Handelsblad*, May 27, 1991.

27. *NRC-Handelsblad*, September 7, 1991.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Quoted in Hans Buddingh', "De zelfvernietiging van Suriname," *NRC-Handelsblad*, Zaterdags Bijvoegsel, July 28, 1990.

## 9

# Civilian Authority Resurgent

Now, there are enough men in the army who want a disciplined body and who want to carry out what the civilian authorities indicate. There are enough. Thus you can't label the military as an enemy of the people. There may be military of that type, but know that there are...civilians of that type too.

Ronald Venetiaan, Interview

When it was clear that the New Front had fallen short of the two-thirds majority in the National Assembly needed for election of the President and amendment of the constitution, both opposition parties—the DA '91 and the NDP—put forth their own candidates for the presidency; the DA '91 also put forward its conditions for helping the New Front to get its two-thirds majority. But Lachmon saw no need for any deals. "The constitution," he said, "permits us to deal with these problems." A special People's Assembly (*Verenigde Volksvergadering*), consisting of all members of local, regional, and national assemblies, could be convened in situations such as this. It had the power to choose a President by simple majority (Art. 181). The same *ad hoc* body, he pointed out, could also approve constitutional amendments.

After the members of the National Assembly were sworn in,<sup>1</sup> and Lachmon was chosen, once again, to be its Speaker, Jules Ajodhia was chosen, by simple majority, to become Vice President. Ajodhia had served as Minister of Justice in the Shankar/Arron government and was a rising force within the

VHP. But the New Front did not have as easy a time with the presidency.

In the last days of the election campaign, it had been announced that Ronald Venetiaan was the New Front's agreed-upon choice for President in a New Front government. Venetiaan had been Minister of Education in the earlier NPK governments (1973-80) and again under Shankar/Arron. With a reputation for integrity, nationalism, and even skillful diplomacy (displayed in the negotiations leading to the Kourou Accord), his selection suggested an action-oriented government. But getting him into the presidency was a tortuous process. The NDP put Jules Wijdenbosch forth as its candidate, and DA '91 picked the popular director of the *Rekenkamer*, Hans Prade. With thirty-four votes needed for election in the National Assembly, and none of the three parties budging in meetings during the summer of 1991, the New Front had no alternative but to convene the People's Assembly in September. Despite all the grass roots organizing that the military had done during its years in power, the NDP had little to show for it. New Front candidates filled far more than two-thirds of the seats in district and regional councils. As close to a thousand delegates filed into the Anthony Nesty<sup>2</sup> Sport Hall for the event, the NDP and DA '91 might have had a preview of the dynamics of constitutional amendment under the Venetiaan/Ajodhia government. Venetiaan received 645 votes out of 811 cast.

The Venetiaan/Ajodhia government took power in somewhat different circumstances than its Shankar/Arron predecessor. For one thing, despite its smaller yield of votes, consociationalism had prevailed—the Front's multiethnic alliance had held (incidentally disproving rumors of a VHP-NDP romance). And, despite its slippage, the New Front faced an opposition that was no longer dominated, by default, by the NDP. DA '91's leadership provided an energetic parliamentary counterpoise to Frank Playfair, Ernie Brunings, and Jules Wijdenbosch, permitting a younger, more confident New Front majority to chart the middle course.

## REBARRACKING THE ARMY

Moreover, the New Front was not as isolated as its predecessor government had been. The outside world was more clearly aroused and coordinated in its determination to check the military, control drug traffic, and help the civilian government achieve its goals. According to the *NRC-Handelsblad*, the stage was being carefully set to strengthen Venetiaan's hand and force compliance from Bouterse. U.S. Marines were reported to be working with French troops in the United States *and* in the jungles of French Guiana. A Dutch naval squadron arrived in the Caribbean to engage in a coordinated effort with the United States to fight drug traffic. Dutch drug-fighting capabilities were strengthened at home, too, in an investigation of

drug-Mafia infiltration of local police forces.<sup>3</sup>

When The Netherlands offered to send military police to Suriname for service in patrolling borders and controlling the ports and airports, Venetiaan responded enthusiastically. "We have no need for such a large military," he added, recommending cuts in the army's budget and manpower, the latter to be reduced from 4,500 to 1,200-1,500 troops. The New Front also made it known that constitutional amendments were being prepared to strip the military of all political powers. As a gesture of possible compensation, Rufus Nooitmeer, Minister of Regional Development, suggested that the military might be given its 1970's wish: a future role in certain kinds of economic development projects. Was this the right combination of incentives and disincentives to coax the military to mend its ways?

The President now set out to systematically corner his adversary. Disavowing any interest in either the Dutch Commonwealth idea or in "confrontation politics" here at home, Venetiaan lured Bouterse and his top leadership into a polite dialogue. At the end of October, the constitutional amendments that stripped the military of their political role were tabled.<sup>4</sup> Passage was assured by DA '91 support, yet Bouterse chose to keep his silence. These initial actions were enough—at least for now—to generate an announcement from the Dutch, at a summit meeting in Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles, that they would soon restore full development aid to Suriname. This would include funds for the "retraining" of the Surinamese military.

This good news was doubtless offset, at least in Bouterse's mind, by a front-page report at about the same time in the *Washington Post*, detailing the alleged involvement of Suriname's army in the international drug traffic. In part, it reported that "Bouterse...allowed his country to become a major transshipment center [for drugs] in the late 1980s....According to ...sources in Suriname, the army protects and allows the use of numerous unregistered airstrips to transship cocaine."<sup>5</sup>

The report went on to say that Bouterse and his associates, including officials of Suriname's Central Bank, were under suspicion of having laundered "millions of dollars in drug profits" through the Bank of Credit and Commerce International—the scandal-ridden, Atlanta-based, Pakistani-owned bank. Even Wim Udenhout, Suriname's ambassador to the United States since 1986, agreed that a thorough investigation was in order. European law enforcement officials, according to Udenhout, estimated that 60 percent of the cocaine reaching the port of Rotterdam passed through Suriname.<sup>6</sup> But all that the *Washington Post* had printed were allegations. Bouterse was furious, claiming that the CIA was trying to frame him and demanding that the government come to his defense.<sup>7</sup>

When Bouterse found himself shut out of a subsequent meeting between the Surinamese and Dutch Defense Ministries, he unleashed a bitter critique of the Venetiaan government on New Year's Eve, 1991. "There is no basis

of trust between the government and the military," he claimed. But he would not resign, "since I can still provide a little help and direction." The Dutch judged his behavior as yet another sign that he was unwilling to accept civilian supremacy.

Arrangements for military training in The Netherlands were announced by Defense Minister Siegfried Gilds, who added that the Dutch were not inclined to send a large mission to Suriname, that military reform was something that Suriname had to do on its own. Nevertheless, it was felt that a steady, gradual approach would be able to erode Bouterse's base in the military. The obvious wealth accumulated by the *Bevel* and his associates could be expected to arouse the distaste of the troops—if that information was handled adeptly.

In February 1992, the government ordered cancellation of the usual celebration of the 1980 military coup. Late in March, the National Assembly approved the constitutional changes that eliminated any political role for the military. At the time, Venetiaan commented that the question of the December murders was "in its time and the proper circumstances an affair that will be taken care of." That summer, Venetiaan installed a commission to study reorganization of the military, inviting a former commando, Colonel Arti Gorre, to be a participant. Bouterse seemed bemused and said that he gave it his blessing.

On November 20, Bouterse resigned his post as Commander. The occasion was the government's decision to publicly commemorate the December 1982 murders. In a meeting at the Memre Boekoe Barracks late in November, Bouterse claimed that Venetiaan was being held on a foreign leash: "The State is giving CIA supporters permission to organize a demonstration. We'll see each other in the streets on December 8....The army will have nothing to do with it, Bouterse certainly not. I am nobody's servant and no one is my master." He did not get much farther in his remarks before he was called to the phone. It was the President. Abruptly, he adjourned the meeting,<sup>8</sup> and two days later, he resigned.

Hans Buddingh' who was at the December 8th ceremony, described the events. The principal ceremony was held in 'Ons Erf,' a handsome community center near the Parliament. A New Front representative told the 2,000 in attendance that intimidation should no longer govern their lives. Relatives and colleagues of those who died spoke of the need for justice. The greatest applause went to Ilse Labadie, Chair of the *Organisatie voor Gerechtigheid en Vrede* (Organization for Justice and Peace), for her leadership in that predominantly women's protest group. She called for punishment of the murderers and clearing the record of those murdered, "the real fighters for democracy," of unjust accusations. History must speak the truth. Venetiaan observed that "because murder kills, victims die, and killers die by their own hand, as well." "Suriname knows her obligations," he averred, and they would

be fulfilled "in a manner and in a tempo that is based upon her responsibilities and the wisdom that the Almighty bestows."<sup>9</sup>

With Bouterse out, Iwan Graanoogst took over once again as acting Commander. Was another coup at hand? The Dutch and American embassies were quick to express their pleasure at the news of Bouterse's resignation. But, recognizing the parallel to 1990, they also offered their full support to Venetiaan. For the next few months, Surinamers waited uneasily to see how military reorganization would fare, and what the foreign and domestic political pressures would produce by way of a military response. In early January 1993, the NDP split; Playfair and Brunings, protesting the role of the military in the NDP and Wijdenbosch's continued leadership of the parliamentary delegation, set up their own Democratic Party. It differed little from the NDP on policy positions. Bouterse retired from the military in February and took over leadership of the NDP. On February 25, dressed in a camouflage uniform, he addressed a large crowd at the Monument to the Revolution (on the site of the fire-bombed police station) and declared, "We have to convince Venetiaan to resign...Wake up, Ronald, get out of your pajamas! You're hurting the people!" As these provocations rang out, the Council of Ministers was locked in a marathon meeting, discussing how to handle the painful economic demands of the Dutch and the European Community for economic reforms. Bouterse's speech exploited these issues to dramatic effect: "We're becoming the fourteenth province of The Netherlands," he warned, predicting that in 1993 the people would call once again for revolution. "The Military has a duty," he said, "to answer the call."<sup>10</sup>

Would Venetiaan be able to remove the other members of the Military Authority (*Gezag*) now that Bouterse was, at least theoretically, gone? Although no longer a constitutional entity, the *Gezag* was still a power, consisting of Graanoogst, Sital, Mijns, and Boerenveen—a formidable group, indeed! Together, they made the first demand: get rid of Minister Gilds. Gilds, in turn, made no secret of his desire to remove them. This view was shared by many in the NPS. But Venetiaan, despite his prompt reactions to Bouterse's insubordination, indicated his reluctance to engage in such a purge without solid legal preparations. Lachmon was publicly even more restrained.

In April, the rumor spread that Venetiaan was about to name Arti Gorre as the new military commander. Bouterse declared Gorre a "traitor," and leaders of the *Gezag*, though once Gorre's fellow commandos, claimed that all the top leaders of the military were about to be cashiered. "We want a member appointed from our own ranks," they argued. In the civil-military struggle, the moment of truth may have arrived. Venetiaan began a series of meetings with party factions in the National Assembly. Meanwhile, expressions of support for the government in this showdown arrived from The Netherlands, the United States, France, Venezuela, and all twelve member states of the European Community.

On May 10, Venetiaan came before the Parliament to report the *Gezag's* resistance to the appointment of Gorre. He was going to proceed to carry out the swearing-in ceremony on May 14 and was prepared to call for foreign military intervention to bring the military to its knees, if necessary. The Dutch and American ambassadors, in an unusual show of support, attended the meeting. The next night, a group of armed men broke into the Suriname Television headquarters during the late news broadcast and set fire to the building. It was totally destroyed. Police managed to arrest one of the men—a former bodyguard of Bouterse's. In a search of his house, a large arsenal of weapons was found. Recognizing that stockpiles of weapons like this could be scattered around the country, Venetiaan quickly combined the changeover of leadership in the military with its rearmament from The Netherlands and United States.<sup>11</sup>

On May 14, the four *Gezag* leaders turned in their resignations to the President, along with an unsigned letter that called Gorre's appointment "unacceptable" to the armed forces. Nevertheless, Gorre was sworn in and immediately set about proving his control over and acceptance among the troops. Later, at the Memre Boekoe Barracks, Venetiaan presented Gorre with the military colors, in the presence of military delegations from The Netherlands, France, and the United States. In preparation for this event, on Bouterse's former home territory, Gorre had ordered the grounds spruced up—cleared of broken-down vehicles, waist-high weeds, and other debris. Journalists were impressed by the transformation. Separate meetings with officers of the special services, air force, navy, and military police seemed to run a satisfactory course.

While Sital and Mijns appeared to accept the *Gezag's* purge as an invitation to go into politics, Graanoogst talked about going into business. But Boerenveen (still insisting on his innocence in the Miami drug affair) received a surprising reprieve. Gorre invited him to stay on as his deputy. Gorre's explanation: unlike Graanoogst, Sital, and Mijns, Boerenveen had never been guilty of political interference in the affairs of state.

As Gorre saw it, the mental transformation of the military was more important than its technical restructuring. "Most of the military have been sick of the [aimless and undisciplined] conditions [in Memre Boekoe] for a long time," he told Hans Buddingh' and Sjoerd de Jong.<sup>12</sup> His earlier popularity among the troops, his religious background (as a member of the Evangelical Brethren), and his distance from the murders and other military indiscretions combined to make Gorre a reasonable candidate for the military's top spot. Boerenveen could help him with any lingering problems with the Bouterse wing in the army, and the strong show of foreign support for civil authority should help keep Gorre and the military in line.

## KOUROU TWO

With the military seemingly cornered, efforts to resolve the conflict in the interior were resumed. Bouterse had successfully torpedoed the Kourou Accord and widened the measure of anarchy that reigned across the country's interior. But there were not too many new cards to be played by the *Bevel* and his collaborators, especially since they found their own wings being clipped. Still, a Pandora's box had been opened among the inhabitants of the interior. How could this situation be repaired?

An effort in January 1992 by the Amerindian intertribal *Raad van Acht* (Council of Eight) to repudiate the Tucayana military leader Thomas prompted the latter to promise to accept the authority of the *Raad*. While the Tucayanas might remain an unpredictable force of their own, this action could be a first step toward consolidating the lines of authority among Amerindians. In what might be a step toward clarifying territorial jurisdictions, New Front leaders discussed redrawing the district lines in the interior to take better note of the Amerindian and Bush Negro patterns of settlement there. An organization of "dignitaries" for development of the interior was formed under the leadership of the traditional chiefs and their lieutenants.

Early in 1992, Ronnie Brunswijk made another trip to The Netherlands, traveling on to the United States at about the same time that President Venetiaan was making his first trip there. Whatever may have been afoot was not revealed. But on April 30, government mediation between the Jungle Commando and the Tucayana Indians had some initial success. Brunswijk and Thomas signed a peace accord in Moengo that, among other things, opened the interior to trade and travel so long as all economic and other activities were "of benefit to the local populations." However, the two groups refused to turn in their weapons to Surinamese state authorities until "structural restoration" of the interior was begun. To this end, the idea of a foundation to focus on social-economic development of the interior was endorsed enthusiastically.

Ironically, the real momentum for this accord may have come from a completely new actor outside the system. In May 1992, the *NRC-Handelsblad* reported that a Japanese firm was willing to invest \$10 million in a hardwood lumbering operation. Dutch and Indonesian lumber companies were involved, and their representatives helped to prod the peace accord along. Lumbering might not be as lucrative as drugs, or good for the ecology over the long run, but its benefits would be less risky for the individuals involved, and more widely distributed. In July, President Venetiaan reached an accord whereby each group would turn in its weapons to a special OAS group by August 15, 1992, in exchange for amnesty. In early August an agreement was reached extending amnesty for crimes committed after January 1, 1985 (excluding those that were "crimes against humanity"). On August 8, the peace accord was signed by the Surinamese government, the Jungle Commando, and the

Tucayana Indians in Paramaribo. Although the demobilization that was to follow was not so pronounced, Bush Negro refugees in French Guiana began to venture home.

In this prolonged and complicated set of insurgencies, there were still some moves to be made. Why should either the JC or the Tucayanas be allowed any further politico-military role in their tribal domain? But was there any way to prevent it, especially if they were burying rather than turning in their weapons? It is hard to imagine these groups in the service of the traditional political authorities. It is more likely that they would continue to be the agents of outside (coastal or foreign) interests—a kind of semicriminal comprador bourgeoisie exploiting the human and natural resources of their respective domains.

### BUT IT'S STILL THE ECONOMY

Whatever happened in the interior, it was still the economy that took its toll most alarmingly on everybody's daily life. The New Front government needed to deliver relief here or face a further erosion of its popularity. Apparently realizing the damage they had done holding up aid resumption until all the conditions were met, the Dutch were quick to offer to restore development aid at their November 1991 summit meeting in Bonaire. All that was required was submission of a Surinamese development plan in April 1992. The Dutch were pleased by the apparent willingness of the Venetiaan government to carry out far-reaching economic reforms to reduce the deficit, devalue the currency, and rein in EA trade. Those steps seemed beyond Venetiaan's and the New Front's political abilities, however.

A program for economic *perestroika* was spelled out in a report by the international consulting firm of Coopers & Lybrand that was presented to the Surinamese government in the fall of 1991. Venetiaan promised a formal response by December 17. Among other things, Coopers & Lybrand proposed restructuring the economy to favor exports rather than imports. This could include concentration on agro-industrial activity, with foreign and domestic investment in infrastructure. In addition, higher import duties should be imposed (to protect import substitution), refrigeration warehouses should be built for storage at Zanderij, and SLM's monopoly over air freight should end. Foreign investors should be encouraged by more liberal terms governing their entry and repatriation of profits. State enterprises should be privatized and the budget deficit sharply reduced and ultimately eliminated. Most significantly, the Coopers & Lybrand report called for a drastic devaluation of the Surinamese guilder (from Sf 1.8 to the dollar to Sf 17 to the dollar).<sup>13</sup>

While the budget cuts may have been the hardest to contemplate, public debate focused on the currency issue. A 1000 percent devaluation was too

drastic for the New Front to accept. With so much new wealth a product of the parallel market and the wasteful import economy, weaning the economy in a healthier direction might take a great deal of time. December 17 came and went. *De Ware Tijd* reported that the government might agree to an 8:1 exchange rate, which would be enough to benefit growth of export industry.<sup>14</sup> While admitting that the Coopers & Lybrand report was useful, the New Front could not make up its mind. Uncertainty naturally fed inflation. Prices, which had risen by 25 percent in 1991, threatened to rise in 1992 by 50 percent or more. The *NRC-Handelsblad* reported that 60 percent of Suriname's population lived below the poverty line.

Income from exports drops further every month. There is hardly any foreign currency. The official exchange rate is artificial: Sf 1.80 for a dollar, while one can get 17 Surinamese guilders for a dollar on the black market. To cite just one case, why does the government spend its scarce resources on the import of shoes, while the Surinamese shoe factory is on the rocks, because it can get no licence for the import of materials?<sup>15</sup>

Frustration in The Netherlands grew. "Bridging aid" agreed upon at the Bonaire meeting, pending Suriname's economic reforms—and a development plan—trickled in in a few areas, but full restoration seemed hung up by the New Front's fear of public reaction to the devaluation and budgetary cutbacks. Dutch legislators discussed the ineffectiveness of aid in the 1970s and wondered if it was worth resuming at the same volume, whether or not Suriname cleaned up its economy.

The government finally proposed a devaluation bill that dropped the Surinamese guilder to an 8:1 ratio with the dollar. (The black market rate by this time was 28:1.) The 8:1 rate, amounting to a 400 percent devaluation, would apply to the bauxite industry—Suriname's most important source of foreign currency. Alongside this official rate, the government would also have a floating rate. Venetiaan explained that money would no longer be printed to cover budget deficits. State enterprises would be reorganized or sold. The government would do its best to continue to provide subsidized food packets for the poor.

Criticism that these terms were too generous to the bauxite companies came from both the government and opposition benches. Ernie Brunings and Frank Playfair attacked the bauxite accord as costing Suriname \$66 million. The devaluation, simply put, would allow Suralco and Billiton to pay lower royalties on their exports, which were priced in guilders. An agreement by the two companies to invest \$217 million in the coming years was viewed as an insufficient payback. The National Assembly continued to debate the issue for days, finally passing the bill on January 9, 1992.

Immediately the dollar reached new highs in the Surinamese currency auction, and strikes broke out in almost every sector of the economy. Doctors

refused to treat patients under the state health insurance program, bauxite industry workers condemned the devaluation and demanded—and got—a 40 percent wage increase, taxi and bus drivers struck when the price of gas and benzine quadrupled, and government workers demanded the same increase as bauxite workers, gutting the government's austerity hopes in the process. In a party meeting on March 27, Henck Arron blasted the Dutch for their conditions for restoring development aid. His frustration was shared by many, in government and opposition alike. If the military was more effectively neutralized, and the chaos in the interior was resolved, the economy was still almost hopelessly mired. Photos in *De West* almost daily revealed buildings in a state of collapse, roads pockmarked and impassable, piles of garbage, and unsanitary conditions in the marketplace and the jails. In its December 31, 1992, editorial, *De West* put the challenge of 1993 in the starkest terms: "In the next twelve months it will be clearer to us all that we have degenerated into a dirt poor nation on the Latin American continent, and no longer hold the exceptional position that we had before 1980, when a false welfare reigned."

It was indeed the start of a long and painful recovery, and there were no guarantees that Suriname would ever reach the level of well-being that it once had enjoyed, and had recklessly booted away.

## NOTES

1. New Front member Arti Jessurun was stymied in his attempt to reenter the legislature by a constitutional prohibition against blood relatives sitting in that body. The DA '91's leader, Winston Jessurun, was his brother. In a dramatic resolution to the dilemma, they drew straws for the seat. Winston won, forcing Arti to step aside. Arti was later named to the *Staatsraad*.

2. This young swimmer won Suriname's first Olympic gold medal (in the butterfly) at the 1988 Seoul, Korea games. He won the gold again at the 1990 Goodwill Games in Seattle. Such a feat brought him great, but also dubious, honor. The country's large new sports arena was named after him, but so too was the ill-fated SLM DC-10 that crashed in 1989.

3. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Sept. 11, 13, and 28, and Oct. 11, 1991.

4. These involved removal of the Military Authority (*Militair Gezag*) as a constitutional organ. Conscription was eliminated except in "special circumstances," and any military and police members who were elected to representative assemblies were obliged to go on inactive reserve. The language of civilian authority/military subordination was strengthened (*NRC-Handelsblad*, Nov. 1, 1991). The power of the *Staatsraad* to suspend decisions of the Council of Ministers was removed as well.

5. *Washington Post*, November 4, 1991.

6. Ibid.
7. *De West*, November 8, 1991.
8. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Nov. 21, 1992.
9. Ibid. Dec. 9, 1992.
10. *De West*, Feb. 26, 1993.
11. *NRC-Handelsblad*, May 22, 1993.
12. Ibid., May 25, 1993.
13. *De West*, Dec. 11, 1991.
14. *NRC-Handelsblad*, Dec. 18, 1991.
15. Marjon von Royen, "Het brood, de kip, en de dikke man," *NRC-Handelsblad*, Mar. 3, 1992.



# 10

## Conclusion

Like you said,...we're bumping into each other all the time....None of us knows the steps and there's no music playing....Are we never going to get it right?...learn to dance life like champions instead of always being just a bunch of beginners at it?

Athol Fugard  
*Master Harold...and the Boys*

This is not the story I had hoped to tell. On my first visit to Suriname over twenty years ago, I was both enchanted and inspired by the place and the people. Traveling through the interior and along the coast, my wife, my children, and I were impressed by Suriname's beauty, the handsome architecture, and the quality of life—compared with other places we had lived in Peru and Mexico. The level of talent, energy, and goodwill seemed exceptional—especially given the exotic and complex demographic mix. As a professor of comparative politics and international relations, I believed in the exciting research possibilities implicit in Suriname's tourist slogan: "The World in Miniature." The political experiences of a dynamic multiethnic society, I felt, might yield important lessons for the multipolar world society we live in. Such musings seem a long, long distance behind me. Given the disorder in Suriname *and* in the "new world order," Suriname may still represent the world in miniature. No doubt these fragmented societies each have lessons to teach each other. But there are also lessons to be drawn from,

and applied to, other *national* systems—ones with strong militaries and efforts at redemocratization, ones with collapsing economic systems held ransom by outside brokers, ones with well-to-do elites feeding on a well-entrenched system of corruption. "The World in Miniature" seems a slogan more appropriate than ever, and more broadly applicable.

When I had completed *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam* in 1976, Fred Ormskirk, the late NPS historian and radio commentator, suggested I delete a number of the more unpleasant stories in the book, claiming that it was better to let go of the past and not reopen old wounds. As a credo to follow in one's personal life, that was fine. But a social scientist or historian committed to the advancement of human society cannot be so charitable. Forgetting the past, or whitewashing it, was more likely to perpetuate problems, in my opinion. Thus, here, too, in my effort to put the course of recent events into a single narrative, I am concerned that the more unfortunate and unpleasant experiences in Suriname's history *not be distorted or forgotten*. Granted, this study only scratches the surface. But it is a broad surface, examined as fairly and impartially as possible. It should thus provide Suriname's own social scientists and historians countless challenges for deeper and more meaningful analyses. If there are dark and unexplained pages in this history, they should not be neglected by future scholars.

## TRANSCENDING ETHNIC POLITICS THE HARD WAY

The debate over the power of ethnicity in society has taken a new lease on life with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and resurgence of ethnonationalism in the former Communist states. Earlier studies of ethnic conflict, plural societies, and cultural pluralism are once again being scrutinized for their models, axioms, and rich comparative data.<sup>1</sup> My earlier work in Suriname demonstrated the power of ethnicity while acknowledging that the full political mobilization of each ethnic group was, at least to some extent, affected by the complexity of crosscutting attachments. Still, social changes in urbanization, education, and communications *did* have the effect of facilitating a far greater political assertiveness of Creoles, Hindustanis, and, to a lesser extent, Javanese. After World War II, this took the form of party formation, with the NPS, VHP, and KTPI the ultimately dominant political homes for these three groups.

Parties held onto their followings after the breakup of *verbroedering* in 1967. Already segmented by ethnic difference, society now became polarized as the carefully built bridges between groups collapsed. A more pronounced fragmentation occurred as rival parties emerged within each ethnic group, scrambling for a chance at consociational power-sharing. Another splitting off occurred as small, sometimes multiethnic, groups denounced the "old [i.e., ethnic] politics," and espoused a higher, more ideological level of contestation.

Most of the radical parties, however, appeared as Creole parties, regardless of their message. Thus, they alienated non-Creoles and those Creoles who were worried about abandoning the status quo. Nevertheless, the status quo offered little more than the patron-client services provided by the "ins," and the more limited support and tense waiting by the "outs." Still another form of fragmentation in ethnic ranks occurred with out-migration (to The Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles, or United States).

## JUDGING THE CHOICES MADE

While there is much still to be investigated and clarified in Suriname's recent history, it is hard to avoid making a few observations and judgments regarding these events. However limited the options may have been in each case, they were, after all, the acts of individuals who were capable of choice.

To start with, Suriname's independence was the product of an ugly chain reaction of ethnic politics: Creole nationalism was driven by resentment and fear of Hindustani aspirations and competition. Wiser leaders might have kept this conflict from nearing the brink of civil war, but the Dutch and Surinamese government leaders were both eager for a "quick fix"—the former (Joop den Uyl) to shed a colony and stanch an immigration flow, the latter (Henck Arron) to establish his credentials in the NPS and to steal the nationalistic thunder of the PNR. "You'll do just fine," they each seemed to say to the Hindustanis. But the latter, looking next door to Guyana, drew another conclusion about the risks of independence.

The dramatic *rapprochement* at the last minute had no lasting value—the NPS reneged on its promise of new elections, and the VHP's obstructionism stripped away the dignity of the *Parlement*. When the fight began over the Koorndijk seat, democracy's image was at an all-time low. Everyone must bear some responsibility for these terrible mistakes. I have no doubt that there have been many apologies and amends made in private for these events. But it is tragic that the *force majeure* necessary to bring people to their senses had to be a rogue military. A closer study of these events, including some frank memoirs by the participants, could fortify the nation against the temptation—and excesses—of ethnic politics (as well as of anti-ethnic politics) in the future.

## THE ROGUE MILITARY

Now for the military. Their coup was an act of adventurism of the most unthinking and irresponsible sort. If we are to judge by the Slagveer account, the ringleaders had no idea where they were going. While I am not convinced

that Bouterse and Horb had the goal of taking power nationwide, those more politically schooled—such as Mijns and Sital—saw the opportunity to clean up and radicalize a badly dysfunctional political system. But throwing out ethnic politics meant throwing out the people with the most political experience. While some of them may have misused their power, they were the babies in the bathwater. Should it all be thrown out, kit and kaboodle?

An idealistic military and civilian collaboration to try something new soon developed centrifugal ideological tendencies. If Bouterse had become cynical about the dominant parties of the center, what must he have thought about the timidity of his new centrist allies, or about the petty bickering of the Left? Nevertheless, the NMR's radical slogans gave Suriname's new regime a modicum of international prestige—both within the region and beyond. Bouterse expropriated such slogans to boost his own reputation, but they seem not to have been seriously intended or understood.

Ironically, the wayward performance of the *Bevel* helped to solidify the restoration of *verbroedering* among the old party leaders and to embolden them in their demand for redemocratization and to be accepted as essential partners in that process. Although they were under an organizational ban for the first two years, the old parties had clearly patched up their differences by February 1982, when they met together on the occasion of Pa Lem's funeral (after Chin A Sen's ouster). The condition for VHP talks with Bouterse was "I'll deal with you only if you deal with them [the NPS], too." Solidarity among the old parties was never in question after that, though close ties between some of the VHP's big financial supporters and the NDP often led to rumors that a VHP-NDP connection might be in the making. To Lachmon's credit, such a new rupture of *verbroedering* never occurred.

Tactically, Bouterse proved himself capable of anything. In a small way, he suggests a Surinamese Pele moving the ball downfield with amazing footwork—now to the right, now to the left, faking, spinning, and lobbing the ball forward. But such an analogy breaks down. A Pele doesn't get away with endless fouls, nor does he keep changing the goal. A more appropriate analogy, on a larger political stage, is Stalin—a tactical genius who also was adept at moving to his left and to his right, changing his goals, and eliminating most of his enemies (though bringing a few "old Bolsheviks" back for stage dressing). Stalin's contributions to the Soviet Union cannot be denied, and many still look back upon him with fondness. But, like Bouterse, he always placed personal power and survival above anything else, and his country ultimately suffered from his rule.

Bouterse's most desperate moment came in the confrontation with the democracy protest in December 1982. His attitude was already clear in February with the ouster of Chin A Sen and rejection of the Lim A Po constitution. Popular demand for constitutional democracy was seen as a personal affront. Mijns, Sital, Naarendorp, and the RVP and PALU leaders

must all share part of the blame here, for they fed the *Bevelhebber* his lines and encouraged his intransigence, knowing that their political popularity was even lower than his own. All became corrupted by this attack on democratic restoration. Like Arron in his earlier confrontations with Lachmon, Bouterse's wounded ego may have permitted him to consider *any* response justifiable. But it wasn't.

One wonders, in a limited way, at those civilians who *didn't* condemn the murders or who chose *not* to dive for cover when the *Bevel* sought their service in one or another of his governments. Were they perversely ambitious and amoral, scornful of democracy and its proponents, or desperately willing to work within the system to save it from itself? Or were they, like Ramdat Misier and the country's newspaper editors, held hostage by fear? Some newspapers closed (or were closed) down. *De West* and *De Ware Tijd* remained more or less in operation; but, with censors ever present and the threat of newsprint being withheld, they exhibited none of the color or editorial daring that they had been known for.

The PALU government's actions in December 1983 (pushing an IMF-designed austerity program) may also have been an act of desperation. Whatever the case, it was sorely out of touch with Suriname's cultural and political realities. (Ironically, this fact is well recognized by the Venetiaan government, itself paralyzed vis-a-vis similar "structural adjustments" demanded by the Dutch.) Government layoffs and hefty income taxes on the best-paid workers in the country could only upset a feeder chain of mutual aid and dependence that reached throughout many extended families. But, beyond the IMF imbroglio, PALU leader Iwan Krolis's dogmatic and uncompromising style may have jeopardized his party's far-reaching development plans. Moreover, an aura of corrupt opportunism attached to some of his lieutenants and further sabotaged PALU's image.

Henk Herrenberg was also a wondrous character in all this. A wily tactician and intimidating presence, Herrenberg managed to carry out a host of missions for the *Bevel*, the most important of which may have been the linkup between Suriname and the Medellín drug cartel. He adamantly denies any such role. But his failure to condemn the December murders is a mark against him—and his credibility. The year spent in Bogotá at the time of the coup offered him as close a look at Colombia's affairs as a Surinamer was likely to get. Who can blame the Dutch press for jumping to conclusions when, after the Dutch aid cutoff in December 1982, Herrenberg proudly trumpeted that he knew of an anonymous donor who would more than match the forfeited Dutch aid?

Any notion that the old ethnic parties, or the Dutch government, had a hand in the Brunswijk uprising seems farfetched. After all, negotiations for a return to democratic government were already in an advanced stage. Why hand Bouterse a security rationale for retaining power? Exile groups in The

Netherlands and United States became involved once the Jungle Commando had shown its mettle, and governmental assistance may well have followed, calculated to wear down the National Army's morale and support for its leaders. But shadow play runs its risks. Whatever the amount of clandestine outside assistance Brunswijk may have received, it was more than matched by Bouterse's well-trained Tucayanas.

## THE COWED DEMOCRATS

Once they were back in power in 1987, why did the old parties appear so inept? They *claimed* that the constitutional rules bound them to wait until the second term of office before they could take any serious moves against the military. The strong actions of the Venetiaan government seem to bear that interpretation out. In any case, both the Front and New Front governments faced extraordinarily complicated and demanding issues—guerrilla war, processes of demilitarization, and, most important, economic *perestroika*—not an easy agenda for any society. Still, it seems that selection of a stronger figure for President in the first government, and a more energetic attack on economic issues, might have kept the military on the defensive. As it was, the opposition seemed to have a field day with the Front and its policy paralysis.

If drugs and drug-running were minor issues blown out of proportion in the Dutch and American imaginations (as Bouterse, Herrenberg, and Wijdenbosch insist), there was still much to be explained: the large percentage (60 percent by late 1991) of drugs arriving in The Netherlands that identified Suriname as their place of origin; the periodic gangland-type murders of Brazilians, Surinamese police, and others in and around Paramaribo; and the triumphant return of Etienne Boerenveen, who, after serving most of his prison term in Miami, was quickly reinstated in his old job in May 1991.

Of course, control over smuggling activities through jungle airspace can be a lucrative source of income whether it is shared with the national treasury or not. A lengthy expose of the Surinamese drug connection in the *Washington Post* charges, among other things, that Henk Goedschalk, Bouterse's director of the Suriname Central Bank, had opened a number of accounts for the bank in the Miami branch of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. The recent BCCI scandal has focused on the laundering of drug money, one such example involving a mysterious Camari Corporation, based in the Netherlands Antilles, which had "lent" the Government of Suriname \$200 million in cash to be deposited in one of the Central Bank's Miami accounts, well beyond the scrutiny of bank auditors. The *Post* story reported frequent trips to Suriname by Medellín druglord Pablo Escobar and the use of some of the drug money to beef up the independent military capacities of Bouterse's troops.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of the 1991 elections,

there was talk of Dutch military police and American DEA agents providing help in closing off the drug lines through Suriname. While this may be an offer the Surinamese government would gladly accept (and the military could not refuse), it is an assignment that only the most intrepid Dutch and American agents might volunteer for. As gorgeous as the Surinamese interior is, its nights can be the "heart of darkness."

Redemocratization has swept the western hemisphere in the course of the 1980s, leaving only Haiti lagging behind. There is much to commend in the manner by which Suriname made the transition. But more detailed accounts are needed. When the old parties succeeded in sweeping aside all the radical proposals from the National Assembly (for functional representation, indirect elections, press controls, etc.), were they really winning battles or merely signing IOUs to a cynical military? The indecisive Shankar/Arron government, despite its overwhelming mandate at the polls, suggests that debt and fear were at work. Debt for the trappings of democracy, fear of the amassed power and undeniable ruthlessness of the military. Other civilian regimes in Latin America have walked the same tightrope with their militaries. But none seemed so boldly insubordinate and willing to obstruct the democratic process as this one. The use of a "front man" as head of state, where that office has also acquired many of the powers of a head of government, ultimately proved ineffective. The real power holders (Lachmon and Arron) may have been shielded from the military and freed to concentrate on other matters. But President Shankar was without the resources (personally or politically) to face down the constant challenges offered by the military and its collaborators.

OAS sanctions against the current military regime in Haiti are unlikely to achieve their end. An invasion is probably out of the question. Could it be any different in Suriname if the military refuses to accept its budgetary and force reductions and/or foreign assistance in combating the drug traffic? Suriname's democracy seems very much at risk, despite the lip service of the military and its friends. A new *Bevelhebber*, new heads of the various service departments, a strengthened police force, and new ties (of training, supplies, etc.) with outside militaries and police forces may subdue and transform Suriname's armed forces. But what about the other armed forces in the country? Counterinsurgency theory posits a 10:1 numerical requirement for any military confronted with an insurgency. Building a military up to face this contingency (presumably required by the many caches of weapons around the country) risks setting up a new military coup.

## COMPARING SURINAME

At the outset, I suggested that though Suriname is "off the screen" of

many students of the Third World, its experiences in struggling to achieve a satisfactory development are those shared by many other countries. Thus, it is important to be more specific with regard to the lessons this case study offers to development theory in the areas of ethnicity, redemocratization, dependency, and stratification.

### Inescapable Ethnicity

If most of the paths Suriname's politics could follow were unattractive, the least unattractive one remained consociational power-sharing between the old political parties. But *real* consociationalism requires the participation of the *major* ethnic parties in the system, not token ones that are used to create the facade of consociationalism. From 1967 until 1980, token consociationalism is what Surinamers were given. No wonder that the military coup was greeted with considerable hope and enthusiasm. The agenda was clear: clean up the system of its corrupt and spoils-ridden behavior, and invent some way by which democracy could be reconstructed that transcended ethnic politics. The military coup and its excesses and failures unwittingly helped to undo the damage of 1967 and send the major ethnic parties back into each other's arms.

Criticism may still be warranted regarding the lack of accountability by leaders to their membership in the parties of the New Front coalition. The principle of the "iron law of oligarchy" may be as inevitable as the saying "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But, given the terms of consociationalism, oligarchy may be tempered by *interparty* debate, while power-sharing complicates and may limit the scale of corruption. In fact, consociationalism brings to political practice its own set of checks and balances. Helped by the ever-present threat of intraethnic "outbidding," power-sharing generates its own demands for accountability and responsible government. As Suriname's leaders continue to work out the dynamics of consociationalism, we will all be beneficiaries.

But here is one question for them: If the present government is able to create a more stable, law-abiding society, and a more relaxed and, possibly, opportunistic politics should emerge, what is to prevent consociationalism from breaking down once more? If that were to happen, and the National Assembly were to be divided into polarized camps, each one including a major ethnic party, a vicious circle could begin all over again—with constitutional government losing popular support and public alienation legitimizing a new challenge by the military or some other armed group.

A related question is even more worrisome. What if one of the principal parties were to go into decline, precipitating either fragmentation or strong outbidding by rival parties? At what point is it legitimate, in the theory of

consociationalism, to break an alliance to forge a stronger, more popularly based one?

There is a second related question: At what point is it appropriate to amalgamate the parties of the New Front into *one party*? Smaller challengers to the big ethnic parties pre-1980 balanced their tickets with members of all ethnic groups, while the big parties only went through the motions—placing people of other ethnicities in nonelectable positions. The Front and New Front have balanced their tickets very carefully, including the most prominent members of the VHP, NPS, KTPI, and SPA in obviously electable positions. Can Suriname move one day from preelection alliances to permanent standing (multiethnic) parties? Perhaps the answer lies not so much with the parties but the people of Suriname whose voting behavior is so keyed to ethnic appeals and identifications.

### Redemocratization

As stated earlier, the military's rise to power in Suriname was the end product of a chain of events whose sequence was fortuitous, if not illogical. Ironically, the independence negotiations had consciously attempted to foreclose such an eventuality. That, for example, is why the presumably nationalist NPK government rejected a developmental role for its army and sought instead to limit it to display. Suriname was surrounded by countries in which the military ruled. Most of these militaries had been the beneficiaries of U.S. aid for programs of "civic action" (development).<sup>3</sup> Suriname's leaders—Creole, Hindustani, and Javanese alike—looked at these Frankenstein-like creatures and thought, "Never here!" (Guyana's creation of a development capacity for its army on top of its already coercive, racially biased political behavior was the surest confirmation of this sort of reasoning.<sup>4</sup>)

The harsh discipline of the small "show army" helped to bring on the uprising, but what reasonable alternatives to these two models (development vs. show) were there? And why didn't the VHP and KTPI blow the whistle on the military's failure to reflect the ethnic makeup of society, as had been promised? For one thing, the Asian groups systematically escaped the draft, through claims of family hardship or failure to pass the physical. Curiously, Chas Mijnaals told the author that the army *did* meet the NPK's promise in 1975 that it would "reflect society." That promise, he said, was intended only with regard to social classes. But that was *not* the context of those constitutional discussions.

An interesting irony is that Bouterse could well have won the presidency of Suriname in a relatively democratic way back in 1982, if he had allowed the Lim A Po/Chin A Sen constitution to be enacted. Similarly, the Mijnaals model of interest group representation would have been operationalized on a basis far

more legitimate than it was in 1985-87. The "Westminster model" of government, involving government and opposition, was being questioned throughout the Caribbean in the 1970s and early 1980s. Yet Caribbean constitutional reform was either cynically abused (as in Guyana<sup>5</sup>), exceedingly modest (as in Trinidad<sup>6</sup>), or fatally postponed (as in Grenada<sup>7</sup>). Suriname's own tragedy began with this failure to institutionalize change in the fall and winter of 1981-82. Compared to later crimes, this one seems insignificant. But the December murders followed inexorably from it. All members of the *Militaire Gezag* share in the blame.

Even before Chin A Sen's ouster in 1982, we have a sense of declining legitimacy for the government through 1981, but there is no very clear sense of the public's interests at stake. Which occupational, ethnic, or other groups saw advantage in such a government? Who swung to the opposition? Claims that the Hindustanis were behind the Rambocus coup filled the air at the time, yet Hindustani businessmen were already beginning to forge ties to the military for their economic advantage.

In fact, though Bouterse had condemned the old ethnic politics, he was himself constrained to use it, which he did very adeptly. He replaced Chin A Sen in the presidency with Ramdat Misier, a Hindustani judge on the Supreme Court, and he kept several Hindustani and Indonesian military figures close at hand (e.g., Sital, Bhagwandas, Hardjoprajitno)—balancing his ticket in the consociational sense.

More to his credit, Bouterse provided work for poor people of all ethnic groups in a number of menial capacities. However opportunistic his politics, Bouterse, like his childhood hero, Johan Adolf Pengel, *did* recognize the importance of class distinctions. But the old parties' patron-clientelism, for all its deficiencies, reached quite a way down the social ladder, and Bouterse must have recognized some limits to building a political base among the poor. Hence his interest in putting some of the state's services to the use of ambitious commercial interests (again, of all ethnic groups). To many in all classes (and especially among the young), he was a larger-than-life hero, gifted with the common touch and exuding a hearty confidence in his television and other appearances. Moreover, there were undoubtedly many for whom his corruption enhanced his stature. But the broader base of popularity that existed in 1980 and 1981 crumbled as his cynicism, egomania, and power hunger prompted the more educated and the middle classes to move to the sidelines and then to the opposition. These are the charges made against many Latin American and Caribbean leaders—civilian and military alike.

In general, how should we evaluate the intentions and accomplishments of Desi Bouterse? I believe that he was (and still is) a ruthless opportunist—a master checker player who, like his hero Pengel, had no compunction about upsetting the board when things didn't go his way. Unfortunately, the positive contributions with which he can be credited—developing institutions at the

local level, raising consciousness about the poor and dispossessed, and pointing out the excesses of ethnic politics—were more than offset by his self-enrichment, his policy inconsistencies, the corruption he spawned, and the human rights violations he committed and/or was responsible for. This is no tragic figure, as sad as it is to see someone with great potential fail to utilize it properly. Bouterse is a criminal who, with his military and civilian cohorts, must ultimately be brought before the bar of justice. But how can this be done? In the Latin American world of redemocratization, civilian governments have generally shied away from prosecuting outgoing military officers. Where they *have* been prosecuted (El Salvador, Argentina) the process was limited, and/or canceled out, by the timidity of prosecutors and judges.<sup>8</sup> As Venetiaan has hinted, the pursuit of justice must await the further entrenchment of civilian rule.<sup>9</sup>

### Outside Pressures

Dutch and other outside players have clearly exercised great influence on the course of affairs in Suriname. Nowhere was this clearer than in the effect that the talk of Commonwealth had upon the 1991 elections, and the subsequent orchestration of American, French, and Dutch military preparations for possible intervention in Suriname. It seems highly doubtful that such a threat would have been carried out—after all, Suriname is not Grenada. But a new Brunswijk-like insurgency was possible, with the capacity to paralyze the interior once again, this time conceivably interdicting the drug traffic or targeting the top members of the *Militaire Gezag* for attack.

Is there any truth to the claims by the military that the CIA and Dutch intelligence service played a role in setting up the tragic 1982 confrontation, the later guerrilla war, and the allegations of drug-running by Bouterse's military? Osvaldo Cárdenas, the Cuban ambassador, has written convincingly of a CIA-Alcoa (Suralco) hand in the 1982 pro-democracy demonstrations, with Roy Horb as the link.<sup>10</sup> Be that as it may, the driving force in the demonstrations was clearly the Surinamese people and their courageous civic leaders. Bouterse's popularity had obviously peaked, as measured by the respective turnouts for Cyrill Daal and Maurice Bishop in October 1982. While a kind of conspiratorial intergovernmental subversion most likely existed, the best (but not good) defense made on its behalf is that Surinamers both in the exile community and back in Suriname wished for this assistance. Nevertheless, it might be argued that had the Jungle Commando not taken up arms in the summer of 1986, the old parties might have negotiated the return of democracy as surely as they did *with* the uprising going on.

In economics, it is claimed that cancellation of the West Suriname Project in October 1981 so enraged the Dutch contractors involved that they began to

turn their government against Paramaribo.<sup>11</sup> In a more general sense, Suriname's economy has always been extremely dependent: first on American markets and investments for its bauxite, alumina, and aluminum production; second on the substantial Dutch subventions both before and after independence. The floundering efforts of the military and its RVP and PALU allies to establish some kind of self-sufficient development policy have clearly proven Suriname's inability to break free from its economic dependency.

While the focus of this study has relegated economic issues to the periphery, it is possible to say that Suriname's development in retrospect may have been benefited in these years by the bursting of the bauxite bubble. Cancellation of the West Suriname Project in 1981 reflected a widespread feeling that the huge monies involved should have gone elsewhere—to benefit agro-industrial and other small-scale ventures and/or to meet human social needs. Resentment of the lucrative West Suriname contracts, combined with uncertainty about the ultimate profitability of the project, merely added to its problems. The subsequent decline of the aluminum industry and proliferation of cheap sources of bauxite elsewhere in the world proved this feeling correct.

To assert the unavailability of dependency is not to argue that Suriname cannot improve its economic condition by an astute choice among dependency options. In fact, PALU and the RVP were probably on the right track with their ideas. With regard to the fragile economies of the Caribbean, Michael Erisman suggests, among other things, "collective clientelism" (the development of assertive bargaining strategies by associations created under the Lomé or CBI accords) and "collective self-reliance" through regional cooperation (e.g., with CARICOM or new Latin American ties).<sup>12</sup>

Finally, if the Dutch connection (or better, "nonconnection," after the aid cutoff) still aroused antagonism among many Surinamers, its longer-term value is indisputable. Dutch (i.e., Western) standards of fairness and jurisprudence were deeply embedded in the consciousness of most Surinamers and could not be allowed to be abandoned. Some Surinamers pointed to "Dutch hypocrisy" in tolerating (and even aiding) a dictatorship in the former Dutch *East Indies* (Indonesia) while punishing a much less violent regime in the Dutch *West Indies*. But they failed to realize that Suriname, like the rest of the Caribbean, was a totally artificial construction, remade, if crudely, in the image of the West. Like it or not, Surinamers have accepted the Western political values imposed upon them. As the military experiment played itself out, an attachment to parliamentary government remained, as did the need for an incorruptible police and justice system, and the tradition of a free press.

For better or worse—I would definitely say for better—Suriname and The Netherlands have come to a clearer recognition of their dependence upon one another. It was always amusing, as I pursued my research, to find that news of Suriname was reported on the "domestic" (*binnenlands*) pages of the *NRC-Handelsblad* and other Dutch newspapers, rather than under "foreign"

(*buitenlands*) news. But if paternalism dies hard, so does clientelism. The years of the "golden handshake," producing irresponsible demands and sullen compliance, have ended. The relationship now unfolding is between two vulnerable, but considerably more realistic, states—each capable of significant assistance to the other. This should lay a better foundation for development and other areas of collaboration. While Commonwealth may not be in the offing, a host of legitimate, integrative activities await the enterprising Dutchman and Surinamer.

### Corrupt Elites

What were the origins and nature of the business-military relationship that led to so much wealth for selected members of both groups? Despite the fact that some NCOs, such as Bouterse, had thriving economic activities on the side before the coup, their know-how and contacts were limited. It was clearly a marriage of convenience for enterprising members of both camps to provide the contacts and protection they each needed. Both Creoles and Hindustanis were among those offering their partnership to the military elites. The benefits, unfortunately, were not very widespread, for Suriname's economy swung from export development and import substitution to commercial importation—eliminating all entrepreneurs but the very comprador bourgeoisie that leftist ideology most condemns. Failure of the small leftist parties and of the Sital/Mijnals clique to speak out against this development clearly marked an end to their ideological credibility.

Why did the small, multiethnic, radical parties fail to work together, and why did they, separately, fail so badly at the polls? I have argued that there was a kind of old school rivalry between radicalized Surinamese students trained in Amsterdam, Leiden, Wageningen, Groningen, and other Dutch universities, and that this (together with loyalty to their Dutch professors and gurus) was more important in some respects than their (usually obscure) ideological differences. Perhaps the jesuitical nature of the Left's feuding (e.g., which neo-imperialist dragon do we slay first?) explains their collective failure at the polls. They were, to some extent, done in by their own overly intellectual formation! As would-be rivals to the elites, they needed to show their capacity at patron-client patrimonialism. Out of power, they lacked the resources to sustain or build a following (except with what Che Guevara called "moral incentives"). Ideas were just not enough. They were done in, as well, by the fear and hostility they encountered in their new places of employment from an older, less trained generation feeling threatened by these young returning "know-it-alls."

The combination of ethnic pluralism and the widely dispersed doses of political ambition, ideology, and generational rivalry provide countless chances

for the corrupting force of fragmentation. In a society of multiple ethnic groups, where aggregation of a stable majority cannot be foreordained, one finds a  $2n + 1$  dynamic. If  $n$  = the number of ethnic groups, their political force is divided or weakened by two (or more) potential cleavage lines (left-right, personalistic, generational, etc.). But their political force is also blunted to some extent by one (or more) antiethnic groups repudiating the organization of political life along ethnic lines. Fragmentation not only weakens, it also corrupts, since those who are at or near the head of a multiethnic society must co-opt in order to aggregate, and whoever engages in co-optation is in turn co-opted. Political vision survives only in the opposition, and even this may be readily exchanged for clienthood under an obliging patron.

Forging a multiethnic elite cartel, then, has an almost debilitating consequence for its capacity subsequently to govern. Ironically, successful aggregation in a fissiparous society almost inevitably results in immobilization or, worse, the commencement of disaggregation. If this is the best of a lot of bad options, there will always be trouble in Suriname.

## NOTES

1. See, e.g., Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1972); Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); and Cynthia Enloe, *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development* (Boston: Little Brown, 1973).

2. *Washington Post*, Nov. 4, 1991.

3. The justification for this policy can be found in Samuel P. Huntington *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); and the equally influential "Rockefeller Report": U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Governor Rockefeller's Report on Latin America*, 91st Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 10-12 and passim.

4. Latin American Bureau, *Guyana: Fraudulent Revolution* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1984), 55.

5. In 1980, Forbes Burnham used a fraudulently elected parliamentary majority to impose a strong presidential office (à la France) on top of the parliamentary government (Percy Hintzen, *The Costs of Regime Survival* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 97). The mixed form of government in Suriname's 1987 constitution mirrors Guyana's, at least in its form.

6. Beatrice Berle Meyerson *et al.*, "Trinidad and Tobago." In Sandra W. Meditz and Dennis M. Hanratty, eds., *Islands of the Commonwealth Caribbean: A Regional Study* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1987), 234-36.

7. In Grenada, a five-person Constitutional Commission was appointed in June 1983. The first public hearing was scheduled for Oct. 25, the day of the American invasion, a week after Maurice Bishop's overthrow and death. Tony Thorndike, *Grenada: Politics, Economics and Society* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1985), 93.

8. In Argentina, the top military officers responsible for human rights violations were released from prison by the Peronist government of Saul Menem (*New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1991). In El Salvador, a handful of officers were tried for human rights violations, but most were granted amnesty (*New York Times*, Mar. 21, 1993). In Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Guatemala, Paraguay, and other states formerly ruled by the military, efforts at pursuing convictions for human rights abuses have thus far failed.

9. In an interview in June 1992, Venetiaan told Hans Buddingh', "We're simply not ready [to proceed in the December murders]. This makes some Surinamers angry, but we are technically not ready to tackle the affairs which we are juridically and internationally obliged to do. Neither are we emotionally ready to systematically investigate the case as the next-of-kin have urged us." As for amnesty, Venetiaan acknowledged that it would "open the way to avoid the issue [and safeguard] the society's peace. But it is evident that for some amnesty is not possible. Therefore, I say: we aren't ready yet." *NRC-Handelsblad*, June 22, 1992.

10. Cárdenas, 43-44.

11. The claim is made in Ludwig van Mulier, ed., *Desi Bouterse: Dekolonisatie en Nationaal Leiderschap* (Nijmegen/Paramaribo: Masusa, 1990), as reported in Peter Meel, "Het mechanisme van de gekwetste trots: Surinaamse revolutie in historische perspectief," *Internationale spectator* 45 (May 1991): 317.

12. H. Michael Erisman, *Pursuing Post-Dependency Politics: South-South Relations in the Caribbean* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 46-57. He also recommends what he calls "super-clientism," playing upon a major buyer's need for a strategic resource. This was Suriname's long-standing strategy from the 1950s until the demise of the West Suriname Project. These are export-oriented strategies. He does not rule out import substitution, but he warns that it should be limited to light consumer activity with a minimal import content.



# Glossary

- Actie Groep (AG)—Action Group, breakaway party from the VHP
- Algemeen Verbond van Vakverenigingen in Suriname "De Moederbond" (AVVS)—General Confederation of Trade Unions, originally associated with the NPS
- Alternatief Forum (AF)—Alternative Forum, party of young, mostly Creole professionals in the 1991 election; see DA '91
- Amsterdamse Volksverzet—Amsterdam People's Resistance, an exile group opposed to the military regime in Suriname
- Beleidscentrum—Policy-making Center, an advisory body to Bouterse
- Bevelhebber (Bevel)—Commander (Desi Bouterse, 1980-92)
- Bevrijdingsraad—Liberation Council, the first of several exile groups opposed to the military regime in Suriname
- Bond van Militair Kader (BOMIKA)—Military union, principally noncommissioned officers
- Bond voor Democratie—Alliance for Democracy, organization of prominent professional interest groups pressuring military for return to democracy in 1982
- Bosnegers Eenheid Partij (BEP)—Bush Negro Unity Party
- Broederschap en Eenheid in de Politiek (BEP)—Brotherhood and Unity in Politics, new name for Bosnegers Eenheid Partij in 1991 elections
- Centrale Landsdienaren Organisatie (CLO)—Central Organization of Civil Servants
- Centrale 47 (C-47)—Labor federation organized by the PNR

- Comitee Christelijke Kerken (CCK)—Committee of Christian Churches, active interchurch body that occasionally takes stands on public issues
- Commission on Development Cooperation Netherlands-Suriname (CONS)—body charged with administering development aid following Suriname's independence in 1975
- Compradores—merchants, a term associated with Latin American dependency theory; such individuals presumably serve outside interests at the expense of their countrymen
- Consociationalism—the practice of powersharing in a multiethnic community
- Corporatism—the method of providing interest groups with direct representation in legislative bodies, bypassing or eliminating political parties altogether (functional representation)
- Democratisch Alternatief '91 (DA '91)—Democratic Alternative (for) 1991, party coalition consisting of the HPP, PL, BEP, and AF
- Demokratische Volksfront (DVF)—Democratic People's Front (tiny, multiethnic Communist party)
- Denkgroep—braintrust, successor to the Beleidscentrum organized during the Udenhout government, 1984-86
- Eenmalige Aanbreng (EA)—one-time account, policy giving individuals with foreign currency unregulated power to import at will, causing extreme shortages and black market activity
- Eigen Aanbreng—See Eenmalige Aanbreng
- Federatie van Arme Landbouwers (FAL)—Federation of Poor Farmers
- Foetoeboi—messenger, pejorative term for political supporter (like flunky)
- Fort Zeelandia—headquarters of the officer staff of the armed forces, on the waterfront of Paramaribo, across the street from the Presidential Palace
- Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling—Front for Democracy and Development, comprising the NPS, VHP, and KTPI, 1987-90
- Functional representation—See Corporatism
- Gemenebest—commonwealth
- Granman—the Grand Chief of a Bush Negro tribe or nation
- Hernieuwde Progressieve Partij (HPP)—New Progressive Party (formerly Hindostaanse Progressieve Partij, Hindustani Progressive Party, small)
- Informateur—The political leader charged with exploring the possibilities for coalition government in a multiparty system
- Ingreep—Intervention, term used with reference to the 1980 coup, not as far-reaching as "revolution"
- De Jongens—The Boys, term used during the first years of the military regime in reference to the NMR and leadership
- Jungle Commando—Also known as Suriname Liberation Army, guerrilla group led by Ronny Brunswijk, opposed to military rule of Desi Bouterse
- Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia (KTPI)—Indonesian Peasant Party
- Keroekoenan Toeledo Pranatan Inggil (KTPI)—Party of High Ideals (formerly

- Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia)
- Kommunistische Partij Suriname (KPS)—Communist Party of Suriname (tiny, multiethnic Communist party, following the Albanian line)
- Krijgsraad—Court martial
- Kroetoe—Formal meeting among tribal leaders in the domain of the Bush Negroes and Amerindians and between them and outside leaders
- Liga van Patriotten—League of Patriots, a pro-Bouterse group in The Netherlands
- Meerjarenontwikkelingsprogramma (MOP)—multi-year development plan, planned for the resumed Dutch development aid after 1987
- Memre Boekoe—The main barracks of the Armed Forces in south central Paramaribo
- Moederbond—Mother Union, nickname for the Algemeen Verbond van Vakverenigingen in Suriname, known also as the Surinaamse Werknemers Bond
- Nationale Assemblée—the Surinamese national legislature from 1985 to the present
- Nationale Democratische Partij (NDP)—National Democratic Party (created for the 1987 elections from the VFB)
- Nationale Militaire Raad (NMR)—National Military Council, set up in 1980 after the coup
- Nationale Partij Kombinatie (NPK)—National Party Combination, an alliance of parties headed by the NPS
- Nationale Partij Suriname (NPS)—Suriname National Party (largely Creole)
- New Jewel Movement—Radical political party in Grenada, in power between 1979 and 1983
- Nieuwe Democratische Partij (NDP)—New Democratic Party, small party set up for 1977 elections
- Nieuwe Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling—New Front for Democracy and Development, comprising the parties of the Front (above) and the SPA
- Obiaman—Priest in the Winti religion
- Oude Rot—Sly fox, referring to political leaders
- Opsporingsbevoegdheid—Investigative powers, normally held by the civilian police, but shared for a time in Suriname by the military police
- Pacta sunt servanda, rebus sic stantibus—Agreements are binding, all things being equal
- Pajongwaaier—Flunky, pejorative term for political lieutenant (see foetoeboi)
- Parlement—Parliament, the Surinamese legislature's name from 1975-1980
- Partai Pembangunan Rakyat Suriname (PPRS)—Party for the Development of the People, Indonesian splinter from the KTPI
- Partij van de Nationalistische Republiek (PNR)—Nationalistic Republic Party, largely Creole

- Pendawalima (PL)—Indonesian party, named after a Javanese epic hero
- Plaatsvervanger—Substitute parliamentary representative, one who is elected to be your replacement if your seat is vacated
- Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie (PALU)—Progressive Workers and Farmers Union, small, largely Creole party
- Progressieve Nationale Partij (PNP)—Progressive National Party, small, largely Creole
- Progressieve Socialistiese Partij (PSP)—Progressive Socialist Partij, small party in the 1970s
- Progressieve Surinaamse Volkspartij (PSV)—Progressive Surinamese People's Party, small, largely Catholic Creole
- Raad van de Vakbeweging in Suriname (RAVAKSUR)—Organized Labor Council of Suriname, umbrella organization for C-47, CLO, and the Moederbond (set up in 1987)
- Regelen—Do political (and usually irregular) favors for someone
- Rechtstaat—The rule of law, presumably guaranteed under a constitutional government
- Regeringsverklaring—The Government's program or plan of action for the coming year, customarily read to the legislature (and nation) by the President early in September
- Rekenkamer—Audit Department of the Suriname Government
- Revolutionaire Volkspartij (RVP)—Revolutionary People's Party, offshoot from the VP, small, largely Creole
- Rijksinkoopbureau—Dutch Central Supply Office
- Ruziemaker—Troublemaker
- Sranantongo—literally, Surinamese tongue (or language), an amalgam of African, English, Dutch, and Portuguese syntax and vocabulary that has evolved over the centuries. Though originating among the Creole slave population, it serves today as a *lingua franca* for all ethnic groups and an expressive medium for poetry, theatre, and song
- Staatsraad—Council of State, the President's advisory council
- Stanvaste—"Stand fast." See Vijfentwintig Februari Beweging
- Staten—the Surinamese legislature from 1867 to 1975
- Surinaamse Partij van de Arbeid (SPA)—Surinamese Labor Party, organized for the 1987 elections (see New Front)
- Surinaamse Socialistiese Unie (SSU)—Surinamese Socialist Union, small party in the 1970s
- Surinaamse Werknemers Bond (SWB)—Surinamese Labor Federation, nicknamed the Moederbond (Mother Federation)
- Topberaad—Supreme Policy Council, successor to the Denkgroep
- Tucayana Amazone Indianen—Amerindian guerrilla group mobilized in opposition to the Jungle Commando
- Unie voor Nationale Bevrijding en Democratie—Union for National Liberation

- and Democracy, offshoot of the Jungle Commando
- Urgentieprogramma—Emergency program of aid, demanded of the Dutch by the Shankar/Arron government in 1988
- Verbroedering—Creole-Hindustani power-sharing as practiced between 1955 and 1967 (and after 1987)
- Verenigde Democratische Partijen (VDP)—United Democratic Parties, an electoral alliance headed by the VHP
- Verenigde Volksvergadering—A People's Assembly consisting of all elected representatives in district, regional, and national assemblies, convened for special national purposes in 1987 Constitution
- Vereniging van Onafhankelijke Intellectuelen van Suriname (VOIS)—Union of Independent Intellectuals of Suriname
- Vereniging van Surinaamse Bedrijfsleven (VSB)—Association of Surinamese Trade and Industry
- Verzoening—Reconciliation, e.g., between political enemies
- Vijfentwintig Februari Beweging (VFB)—Twentyfifth of February Movement, party-like organization supporting the military rule of Desi Bouterse
- Volkscomites (VCs)—People's Committees, set up in over 100 neighborhoods and villages under the NMR by the mid-1980s
- Volkspartij (VP)—People's Party, small, largely Creole
- Vooruitstrevende Hervormings Partij (VHP)—Progressive Reform Party (largely Hindustani), formerly bearing the name Verenigde Hindostaanse Partij (United Hindustani Party) and Vatan Hitkarij Partij (Party to Promote National Welfare)
- Westminster democracy—Legislative rule by means of contestation between "government" and "opposition"
- Winti—Religion shared by Bush Negroes and many in the urban area, consisting of spirits whose intervention in human affairs is both sought and feared by its adherents
- Winti wai, Lanti sa pai—The wind blows, the Government will pay (Sranantongo expression)



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