On July 3rd 2002, while this monograph was already in press, thousands of Afro-Guyanese protesters, some shouting “fyah, more fyah,” marched 18 miles from Buxton and other East coast villages into downtown Georgetown in what was clearly meant to be a political show of force at a time when CARICOM Heads of Government were meeting in the city. The march was organised by a radical Afrocentric group which called itself the Peoples Solidarity Movement, led by PNC activist, Phillip Bynoe.13 The march ended in an orgy of looting and arson which claimed two lives and resulted in gunshot injuries to ten other persons. Two business places and two vehicles were destroyed by fire, and two other buildings were saved from a similar fate. Some of the protestors also broke away from the main group and stormed the Office of the President. The events provided dramatic evidence of Guyana’s perennial and structural political crisis, the extent to which the street can paralyse the state.

The PPP/C described the protest as an act of “terrorism” and a “reckless assault on constitutional authority” which had as its ultimate purpose the overthrow of the freely elected Government of Guyana. A Presidential Office spokesman claimed that the attack on the Office of the President was unprecedented and must be seen as an attempt to “assassinate President Jagdeo and remove the democratically elected PPP/C Government from Office” (Stabroek News, July 11, 2002). The Opposition Peoples National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) disclaimed responsibility for the vandalism that took place at the Office of the President, and denied that there was any attempt on the party’s part to overthrow the government or to assassinate the President who was known to be attending a CARICOM meeting some distance away from the President’s Office. As Robert Corbin, the PNC’s Chairman put it, “the PNC/R is a party that believes in the power of the people. We have held thousands of demonstrations all over Guyana, and once we have been in charge, they have always been peaceful and orderly.” (Statement to the Media July 4, 2002).

Though denying that Bynoe was a leader of the PNC/R, PNC/R Political Leader Desmond Hoyte expressed sympathy for the issues which the protesters sought to address, and warned that the protests would continue, “not only in

13 The march began in Buxton at 5 a.m. and attracted supporters as it snaked its way for 18 miles into Georgetown. As it progressed, there were ominous signs that some elements had arson on their minds who had to be warned by an over-stretched, ill equipped and dispirited Police Service. One notes that the march originated outside of Georgetown. There in fact seemed to be a shift of opinion in Georgetown towards more moderate behaviour. The reverse seems to be the case in the black villages off the East Coast whose residents bitterly complain about joblessness, discrimination, and the imminent collapse of the bauxite industry.
the near future, but also in the distant future until the PPP/Civic government got its act together. We are protesting against a government that is corrupt, that is unjust, oppressive, racist, that is not prepared to be fair in its dealings with the citizens of the country, a government which believes that its duties are only towards its own supporters. We find that unacceptable.” (Stabroek News, July 7, 2002)

The protest, which Hoyte had earlier warned would be forthcoming, was fuelled by several things. One was the general feeling on the part of many PNC/R supporters that the PPP/C government was unmindful of their feelings of deep material and symbolic marginalisation. As one marcher complained, “right now, people are punishing. [sic] We need a government of everybody. It doesn’t have to be PNC or GDP, but it must represent everybody. Neither party can govern Guyana without the cooperation of the other.” The feeling of being excluded was exacerbated by the imminent shut down of the Bauxite industry which traditionally employed many Afro-Guyanese and the collapse of the dialogue experiment. Hoyte complained to Jagdeo that he had not given sufficient weight to his concerns and had “possibly misinterpreted the unfailing courtesy and patience” with which he had approached their discussions (Hoyte to Jagdeo, April 23, 2002). Hoyte and the PNC had seemingly come to the conclusion that “more fyah” was necessary to get the Government to heed their demands, and had chosen to apply street pressure during the meeting of the 23rd Caricom Summit, an act which it must have anticipated would embarrass the Government and force it to take notice of their many grievances and complaints.

The PNC felt that protest was justified when a government systematically and continuously betrayed the people’s trust and turned a deaf ear to the people’s protest. As the PNC Chairman put it, “we have lost all hope for a better future. The dilemma of Guyana is that there can be no order without justice and no justice without order.” Hoyte also used Jeffersonian language to chide the American, Canadian and British ambassadors who had criticised the party’s support of the march:

We note the recent statement issued by the heads of the United States, United Kingdom and Canadian diplomatic missions to Guyana. This foray into the internal affairs of Guyana is, to say the least, ill-advised, unbalanced and unhelpful. Insofar as it purports to define ‘democracy’ and the basis for the authority and legitimacy of the government, it is woefully incomplete and startlingly ingenuous. We reject as out of hand any implied thesis that a government, merely because it has been elected to office, has the right to ride rough-shod over the citizenry, woefully to constitute itself the chief law breaker in the society, to be as corrupt, unjust, vicious and oppressive as it pleases. We would in passing remind the diplomats of the words in that wellspring of democracy, the (US) Declaration of Independence: ‘that when any form of government becomes destructive to the inalienable rights of the people, it is the right of the people to abolish it.’ When a long string of abuses and usurpations evinces a design to reduce (the people) under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and to provide new Guards for their future security. We are not saying that this is a course to be lightly undertaken; but we do say there can be circumstances in which this can become an option, even in a democracy. Having said that we wish to reiterate that PNC/R has no agenda to overthrow the government, notwithstanding PPP/C propaganda. (Statement to The Media July 11, 2002).

Following the march, there were charges and counter-charges as to who was responsible for what. Each party had its own narrative as to what “really took place.” There was however general agreement on some things. All agreed
that Indians were the principal victims of the robbery, looting, and arson that took place during the march. There was also widespread agreement that the events had embarrassed and shamed Guyana in the eyes of the region and the international investing and donor community, and had set the country back both economically and politically. Even PNC/R supporters were outraged, and the PNC/R leadership felt compelled to admit that the invasion of the Presidential Secretariat had distracted attention from Guyana’s real problems. Hoyte in fact described those who entered the Office of the President as persons who were “misguided and/or misled.” Party Chairman Robert Corbin agreed. “There were people joining the march along the route obviously with a different agenda. There were some agents provocateur, we believe, who were deliberately there to create confusion and give the march a bad name.” PNC spokesmen further allege that a “hidden” mercenary hand was involved in a plot to set the President’s Office ablaze and to attack “black” Presidential Guards, and that this was intended to project the PNC as a party that was intent on seizing power by any means possible. The PNC conceded that its image, and that of the Political Leader, had been damaged, and that tactical blunders were made which should never be allowed to recur.

The march was strongly condemned by media elites. The Government owned Guyana Chronicle complained editorially that:

Untold damage has been done to the country’s image. The events of last week occurred on the very day that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government summit opened, which meant that not only did we have esteemed visitors in our country, but also legions from the foreign press who would no doubt have been appalled by the violence in the streets. The summit had been a major boost to our fledgling tourism industry with all the major hotels for the first time in a long time reporting full occupancy. The protests would no doubt raise serious questions about the safety of hosting such events in the future in Guyana, but we do hope that those involved in planning these events will understand that the vast majority of Guyanese are law abiding and do not identify with the minority of hooligans responsible for the unrest. It will take renewed and Herculean efforts to woo investors who will no doubt be wary of future prospects. (July 11, 2002)

The independent Stabroek News was equally critical, even though it admitted that the PPP’s record was pitiable:

Yes, it is true that the Government is incompetent. Yes, it is true that it is frustrating negotiating with them. Yes it is true that they are weak. Yes, it is true that their cumbersome collective leadership system makes them indecisive in some circumstances and obdurate in others. Yes, it is true that they have no inkling of the extent of the alienation of many Africans. Yes it is true that they have an indifferent grasp of protocols. Yes, it is true that they have made every blunder in the book since February 23. But does that justify the PNC/R doing what it did yesterday? Absolutely, unequivocally not. (July 7, 2002)

While all agreed that the negative fallout from the street demonstrations was extremely serious, there was no agreement as to what was intended by those who planned and executed them. In the PPP/C’s narrative, the march was organised by “brigands” “terrorists,” “bullies” and “extremists” with the treasonable intention of assassinating President Jagdeo and overthrowing the democratically elected Government of Guyana. PPP ideologues and spin doctors argued what took place was the culmination of a longstanding plot to destabilise and ultimately topple a government which the PNC knows it could not remove by the ballot box. Street violence had therefore become the functional
alternative to conventional political competition. In the eyes of the PPP/C, what the events made crystal clear was that the Afro-Guyanese dominated PNC/R did not consider the Indo-Guyanese fit to rule Guyana and had never really accepted the fact that paramountcy and hegemony had passed to the Indo-Guyanese following the 1992 elections.

The PNC/R reacted sharply to its depiction as a “terrorist” organisation and demanded a retraction which was of course not forthcoming. The party also denied that there was or is any plan afoot to overthrow the Government or to assassinate President Jagdeo. The PNC noted that the marchers, many of whom were women, were unarmed and under almost constant police surveillance, and counter charged that it was a failure on the part of the security forces to install the normal security barricades to the Presidential complex that allowed the marchers to have ready access to that office, the gates of which were carelessly or mysteriously left unlocked.

According to the PNC’s narrative, the 200 or so persons who took the detour to enter the Presidential compound did not forcibly enter it. Their claim was that the marchers were invited in by persons within the compound, a claim which the Police denied. They also argued that the protesters who lost their lives or who were wounded did not rob anyone in the building or vandalise the accounts office, and could easily have been arrested and charged instead of being shot. PNC supporters claim that the shots were fired by a security guard who happened to be Indian, a fact that the PNC did not make public for fear of causing fresh riots.

The PNC/R claimed, perhaps disingenuously, that the march was not organised by them, but admitted that they supported it as a strategy to pressure the Government. As Chairman Corbin put it, “this government only responds to pressure and action, and we have to understand that there is no point speaking to them politely.” Hoyte had warned in May 2002 that there would be an “implosion” in the second half of the year 2002, and it may well be that the event was staged in the hope of reminding CARICOM Heads that the terms of the Hermandston Accord and the St. Lucia Statement had not been adhered to. If the events were organised to precipitate CARICOM’s intervention, it backfired. Hoyte was in fact clearly disappointed by the response of CARICOM Heads whom he felt had allowed themselves to be “gulled” by President Jagdeo.

As he whinged:

It is clear that the CARICOM Heads do not fully understand the political and social realities in Guyana and how deeply ordinary people are affected by and resent the corruption, racism, discriminatory practices, and the general oppressive behaviour of the incumbent regime, and why they feel compelled to resist. They might well want to ask themselves why ordinary people would begin a 17 mile march to Georgetown at 5 o’clock in the morning. When a government becomes the chief law breaker in the nation and consistently flouts the laws and even the provisions of the Constitution, it is little wonder that the country will find itself in a state of unrest. (Press Release, July 11, 2002)

In the absence of a Commission of Inquiry, it is difficult to get incontrovertible information

14 The Police denied that they were negligent as many have charged, arguing that they could not have anticipated that people would storm the hitherto sacrosanct Presidential Office. That was unprecedented. They also argued that they sought to use minimum force, since to do otherwise was to incite mayhem in the city as had previously occurred whenever the Police acted repressively.

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as to who did what. The evidence however does indicate that the PNC’s central leadership did not encourage anyone to enter the Office of the President. Nor was there any plan to overthrow or force the Government out of office by August 1, 2002 (Emancipation Day) as was alleged by PPP spokesmen (Express July 28, 2002). Extremist elements had however publicly expressed the view that power should be seized by any means necessary. In sum, the tail had wagged the dog; the PNC had lost control to the “wild men.”

Power or Else

Following the crisis, there were renewed demands for power sharing or for a resumption and restructuring of the dialogue process. Moderate PPP/C spokesmen openly appealed for the process to be restarted as did several groups in civil society. The Minister of Health, Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, told the PNC that they should not expect dialogue to yield meaningful results overnight. “It can be excruciatingly painful, but we must continue talking until there are results.” He nevertheless warned the PNC/R that there could only be one President at a time. Rightwing elements in the PPP/C, who were clearly in the ascendancy, were however opposed to any such attempt to reopen the dialogue process. In their view, Indians must stop being as docile as they had been during Dr. Jagan’s time. They must answer “fyah” with “more fyah.” As one asked:

Why is President Jagdeo still asking Hoyte to resume talks and so many others are calling

for a resumption of dialogue with the PNC? What will it accomplish? How many really think that the PNC represents the well being of the Black people in Guyana? You do not reward terrorism with dialogue. The PPP needs to go on the offensive against the PNC. Responding with meek statements every now and then will never work. President Jagdeo must realise that he is not Mahatma Ghandi and Hoyte is certainly not Martin Luther King fighting against racism. If Hoyte can call for “Mo fyah,” then President Jagdeo should respond, at the very least, in kind. Unfortunately, this is the only kind of dialogue that Hoyte and PNC understand, and the sooner we Guyanese realise that, the better. (Guyana Chronicle, July 12, 2002)15

The PNC/Reform initially spoke with contradictory voices as to whether dialogue and/or power sharing should be taken off “pause” and put back on the agenda. The moderate Reform element condemned the political brinkmanship that led to the violence that had taken place, but was equally critical of what it considered to be misleading PPP/C propaganda about a plot to overthrow the Government. On the question of the way forward, it called on the international community to try and bridge the chasm between partisans, the aim being to get President Jagdeo to honour the promises which he had made in the dialogue process within the next 60 days. The Reform element also called for external help in convening a conference of civil society and other interest groups to discuss mechanisms for constitutional and other changes leading to a more inclusive governance (Stabroek News July 12, 2002). Such a call found a ready echo in Guyana’s private sector

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15 Interestingly, some moderate Indo-Guyanese have complained that PNC’s political intransigence makes it difficult for democratic elements within the Indian community to emerge, just as had been the case during the Burnham years when elements within the Afro-Guyanese community were brutalised and even assassinated by PNC extremists.
which openly expressed fear for its economic survival. Many who had brought investment into the country after 1992 had already given up and joined the Northward trek. Many others were contemplating doing so.  

The Stabroek News also felt that unless the deadlock was broken, another march and even foreign military intervention was possible. As it declared editorially:

The Government has been quick to see in [the events] confirmation that the violent overthrow of the Government is planned, a conviction which will now inevitably shape and harden attitudes. But Government should also be pondering how easy it is for extremists to ignite uprisings and the incapacity of the disciplined forces in coping with them. For the Opposition, the incident should have brought home forcibly the risks of association with extremists capable of defining the official leadership. Riding a tiger now, as always, remains a hazardous exercise. The disorders have brought upon the Opposition national and regional censure and the real possibility, if not threat, that there could be international remedial intervention even including military intervention. Now, as already noted, there is an overwhelming national sense of urgency that the political impasse must be brought to an end as the void which it leaves is being filled by extremism, criminality and disorder tending towards anarchy (Stabroek News, July 10, 2002).

The feeling was that failure to arrest the crisis would further destroy such social cohesion as was left, aggravate the criminality that had spread to the villages, and put paid to any hope of renewed economic growth. One notes that the rate of GDP growth, which had increased between 1991 and 1997, had been negative in 1998, and that in 1999 per capita income was a mere US$800, the same which obtained in 1975/76. In that year, according to a survey of living conditions, thirty-six percent of the population was said to be living below the poverty line, while 19 percent was assessed as living under conditions of extreme poverty. Fifty percent of the population was reported to be without work. (Eradicating Poverty and Unifying Guyana: National Development Strategy 2001-2010).

16 In the months prior to the march, escalating criminal activity had become a source of acute personal and political anxiety in Guyana, and attempts on the part of the government to deal with it served to aggravate racial and political tensions. Despite the fact that the security forces were still dominated by the Afro-Guyanese, many of the latter complained that the Special Target Squad or “Black Clothes Police” were hired thugs and enforcers for the PPP, and were brutal in their dealings with communities and individuals assumed to be opposed to the Government. Lack of trust between this unit and Afro-Guyanese communities in fact reached crisis proportions in 2002. The “Black Clothes Police” were seen as persons who had betrayed their race by working for an Indo-Guyanese government.

Not surprisingly, the Indo-Guyanese community claimed that they and not the Afro-Guyanese were the principal targets of the criminals. Ravi Dev, spokesman for the Indo-centric Rise Organise and Rally (ROAR), insisted that much of the criminal activity was politically motivated. Dev observed that five Afro-Guyanese bandits who had escaped from the Camp St prison on February 23rd, 2002 had openly declared that they were “fighting for the Afro-Guyanese people who were underrepresented in Guyana. So there is no question that there is a political nexus, a political linkage.” The bandits are still at large, and it was widely believed that they were being protected by elements in the Afro-Guyanese community purely on racial grounds. PPP extremist pamphleteers in fact claim that the PNC is using criminal elements (these apes) as an “execution squad” to reduce the number of Indians in the country in the hope that this would give the party a chance of regaining power!
The PNC expressed itself open to the resumption of dialogue, but felt that there must be preconditions. At a general membership meeting held on July 14, 2002, the party re-emphasised the “paramount importance” of “loyalty,” and sought to paper over the cracks which existed in its ranks between militants and moderates, some of whom were vying to succeed Hoyte as leader of the PNC/R at the forthcoming August Party Congress. Indeed, there was a view that the posture displayed by some elements during the crisis was driven by the competition to succeed Hoyte. On the question of the resumption of dialogue, the party maintained “its resolute stance”, that the dialogue process would remain on “pause” and would only be restarted if the decisions on constitutional and parliamentary reform already taken were implemented.17 As the Party put it, “the Government has failed to satisfy the necessary conditions for the resumption of dialogue. Dialogue which does not result in a resolution of crucial issues or which leaves large sections of the population frustrated is useless and dangerous” (Press Release July 4, 2002). The Party however agreed that in view of the inadequacies of the political system and the practices of governance, it was prepared to explore forms of inclusive governance which it believed could be of benefit to the Guyanese people. It did not however promise to abandon the streets as an arena of militant but legitimate protest against injustice and monopolistic political behaviour. In their view, “there were no limits to peaceful protest.”

Mosaic vs Phallic Politics

A number of doleful conclusions can be drawn from what happened in Guyana in July, 2002. Guyana is clearly hemorrhaging badly, and its economic, political, judicial and security systems have become even more sclerotic and in a state of near collapse. It is also clear that there were sharp ideological and personal rivalries within the ranks of both parties which made negotiation and agreement difficult, if not impossible. How could the policy outputs of the dialogue process be processed if they were the subject of sharp personal and organisational

17 The PNC was anxious to have the agreements on the parliamentary oversight and management committees implemented since failure to implement them rendered it impossible for key appointments to be made to service and regulatory commissions. Disputes involved the size and composition of these committees and the question as to whether ministers should sit on or chair them. The PNC was opposed to any ministerial presence on the oversight committees and wanted parity of representation between the governing and opposition parties. The PNC argued that given the principle of collective responsibility, it would be improper to have ministers serve on or chair the sectoral committees.

The PNC was also unhappy with the manner in which parliament functioned. “Our parliamentary system is but a sham, summoned at the whim and fancy of the governing party on very rare occasions. Opposition questions are rarely if ever tabled; members days are not held, and the proposal to establish 7 new standing committees ... have been frustrated” (See PNC Press Release July 4, 2002). The PNC also complained bitterly about the arbitrary way in which parliamentary business was conducted in Guyana and the Government’s refusal to concede ordinary courtesies to the Opposition as the Herdmanston Accords had enjoined. The St. Lucia Statement signed by CARICOM Heads in 1998 had also commited the PPP to “facilitate the functioning of the Opposition in the National Assembly, including consultation with all Parties in the Assembly in respect of the establishment of a Parliamentary Management Committee for the better organisation and functioning of Parliament as established in a number of parliamentary democracies.” (See “The Management of Parliament,” Guyana Review 10(114) June 2002).
differences within the PPP/C? How could President Jagdeo deliver on his promises if he was not the leader of the PPP and had to refer everything to the collective leadership of the party located at Freedom House? Was it not likely that the need for him to prove that he was “strong” force him to be intransigent in his dealings with Hoyte and the PNC/R?18

The crisis made it even clearer that civil society in Guyana was weak, atrophied, and ethnically divided, and that the small middle class was impotent and unequal to the task of getting the parties to act sensibly and responsibly. It was also evident that Guyana’s political culture, like that of the Irish, nurtured as it has been over decades on a diet of struggle, strife and strike, paralyses its leadership. Any attempt at purposeful action triggered a sit in, a strike or a long march which much damage was done to life, limb, and property. One could not turn off old historical and cultural taps and pipelines overnight. They were badly corroded and continue to leak.

Partisanship and political temperatures were also much too high, and the incessant radio and TV talk shows continuously inflamed the minds of the masses. Memories of political victimisation, past and present, real and imagined, were also much too vivid. Hard liners, who were in the ascendancy in both parties, talked past each other, much like the Israelis and the Palestinians. All of these cultural and conjunctural factors were aggravated by the structural poverty which existed throughout Guyana, though more particularly in the hinterland and the urban centres where a sense of alienation and hopelessness was pervasive. Everyone wanted to migrate to Canada or the US, whether legally or illegally. In sum, the dense political jungle was reclaiming the civic landscape.

Attempts to broker political peace in Guyana must take heed of the fact that Guyana is a deeply traumatised society in which the two major ethnic groups each have their chosen rituals, traumas and hurts (real, invented and imagined) which mark and sustain their identity as a group, the “we ness” and “they ness” which characterise their behaviour. These feelings of shared belongingness and of being besieged, which were nurtured over many years of silent

18 There was much speculation about the nature of the divisions within the two parties. In the PNC, Robert Corbin and Vincent Alexander were typed as radicals while Raphael Trotman was typed as a moderate. All three were said to be vying for leadership of the party. Within the PPP, one view was that President Jagdeo was young, weak, and inexperienced, and that everything was done ad referendum to the collective leadership at Freedom House. Some challenged this view, and argued that Jagdeo and Cabinet Secretary Roger Luncheon had a “cohabitation” arrangement at the Presidential Office. It was said that Jagdeo micro-managed affairs of state, especially those relating to finance and foreign affairs, while Luncheon handled security (the “Black Clothes Police” is said report directly to him) the public service, and the judiciary. Luncheon was seen by the Afro-Guyanese as the ultimate nennakaram, the powerful black personage who had betrayed his tribe for a mess of potage.

With respect to Jagdeo, one view is that he feigns weakness while negotiating with Hoyte in order to avoid making concessions which he himself does not endorse. The need to “refer things” is said to be just a ploy to keep Hoyte at bay. There would seem to be some truth to this assertion. Some of Hoyte’s supporters had in fact began questioning the utility of a dialogue process which seemed to help Jagdeo build legitimacy but yielded little that was concrete for the PNC/R.
and open conflict in and around the plantations and villages, are reactivated during periods prior to and following elections, when strikes or marches in the streets take place, and during ethnic festivals. Any attempt to build political bridges by the implantation of super-structural devices such as dialogue or power sharing must recognise the historical, social and psychological contexts in which these attitudes were developed. To be effective, social reconstruction must accompany efforts at political reconstruction, if not precede them. Power sharing cannot work in a vacuum.

In traumatised societies, calls for power sharing and the empowerment of out groups are seen by the group or regime which is being asked to make the greater number of concessions or sacrifices as a prescription not only for material loss and deprivation, but for symbolic loss as well. Power is conceptualised as a zero-sum commodity and calls for power sharing are seen as a threat to the ruling political and social elite's control over the commanding heights of the state apparatus, and also as a recipe for the loss of psychic income and social face, especially if the new partner to the proposed shared arrangement is seen as socially challenged or to have moral values that are more "flexible" than those claimed by the erstwhile hegemon. If one party thinks of itself as the party of god or virtue, and the other as ethically or religiously challenged, fears of contamination arise. The arrangement may either not last or remain fragile.

Power sharing seems to work best with groups which have shared core values and past associations, and equally important, where the relationship between them is asymmetrical. Where the parties are roughly equal in terms of power, or one is seen as a threat to the political survival of the other, the chances of success are less than would be the case where one party is clearly dominant, but needs the support of the other as a junior partner. Power sharing also seems to work best in societies where parties, though distinct, see themselves as part of a mosaic which must work together to get public goals achieved. The Dutch talk about the "polder" model, East African villagers talk about "harambee," and Tobagonians talk about "lend hand." In certain political systems, diversity is seen as legitimate; people are encouraged to be what they are and hold the views they have, but are also expected to cooperate with others to get certain basic things done. Parties in these systems are also mature enough to accept the discipline of coalition. Caribbean politics are however not driven by a search for consensus, but by the notion that the winner takes all.

Another problem with the power sharing concept in the Caribbean is that the word itself poses ideological problems for many. Desmond Hoyte, for example described the word as a "shibboleth," something without any precise meaning. His complaint, and that of others, was that people use the term but do not stop to give it any precise definition or think it through thoroughly How does one give the concept "traction" in a society where civil society is weak, ethnicised, and not easily mobilised, and where the political culture does not conduce towards consensual problem solving and coalition building? How does power sharing work in societies where leaders believe that they must present themselves to themselves, their followers, and to each other as "strongmen," "cocks of the political gayelle?"

Part of the problem is that Caribbean leaders have been programmed to see themselves as sabre rattling maximum figures. Politics is seen as an activity wherein macho men "cock" their rivals and monopolise the political stage. Power sharing also becomes a problem because the state and the spoils and patronage that are derived therefrom are considered
ultimate prize of politics, not to be shared with any competitor. Only one combatant can wear the golden crown. While power-sharing might thus be an antidote to the deep feelings of ethnic insecurity and deprivation, the prevailing tension in Guyana is much too high to accommodate any such entente. What is ideologically necessary might not be politically possible.

Guyana is at the proverbial crossroads, and clearly needs the help of regional and international interlocutors to get civil discourse and dialogue back on track. PNC elements have even suggested that initial meetings may need be held outside Guyana under the auspices of diaspora groups and/or the regional and international community. One waits to see when and under what conditions the drama would unfurl.
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