

## **The Credibility of the Questioners of the Army/Govt' version of the Quelling**

I had listed and cited the various sources that queried the situation of the Rupununi Uprising in a previous letter (KN-Aug 26th, 2005. and SN-Aug 20th, 2005). Mr Joe Singh ([SN Sept 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005], and others) has questioned the credibility of the sources and scenarios that I had cited as: "These are merely figments of the fertile imagination of the feeble." I can only go with the written documents available to me. Let us therefore look at these sources and examine their credibility.

Dr C. Jagan, then leader of the opposition was the first to raise the issue (\*1). As far as I can find he never retracted his statement. Yet, Mr Joe Singh (and others) served under President Dr. C Jagan as his Chief of Staff (COS, or CO). I can find no record where Mr J. Singh (or any other officer) said: Sir, I cannot accept your offer, since you have maligned my 'brother in arms,' members of the security forces, and I who were involved in the Rupununi operation. We find your previous statements about the Rupununi Uprising to be very offensive (or something to that effect).

I would think that as a matter of principle Mr Singh (and others) would say, I/We would only serve as your COS (or CO) ONLY if you publicly withdraw your statements. Nor do I find any record of any official of the GDF asking President Janet Jagan to retract the statements of her late husband and that of the PPP. Are these two former Presidents of Guyana feeble minds?

Like it or not, two of the best brains (at that time) in PPP were Mr V. Teekah and Mr Ranji Chandisingh, hence their defections to the PNC was hailed as a major coup. Mr LFS Burnham went after the best and brightest to serve him and his interests. Mr Chandisingh was therefore judged highly competent and sane by the then President Mr. LFS Burnham, yet we have no public record of Mr R. Chandisingh retracting his statements about the Uprising or his being asked to do so in 1976, when he joined the PNC. (I am certain that these highly intelligent gentlemen thought that they could do more for the nation by being inside the Govt. rather than being outside. It was even a trend of thought that this was the way the PPP was infiltrating the PNC. The high placing of these defectors even angered hard-core PNC-supporters. They (Teekah and Chandisingh) were resented, yet to their credit, they never recanted what they had previously said or believed in)

It is hard to dismiss these men and the PPP leadership as being feeble or being malicious, since they (recognizing security threat from outside) even proposed and supported the formation of the People's militia (\*1).

Dr. Walter Ramsahoye, medical practitioner, told the Disciplinary Forces Commission of Enquiry (DFC) headed by Commissioner David Granger that with regards to the Rupununi Uprising... "if there were human rights investigations, many persons who participated in the quelling would be subject to criminal charges in the World Court." (SN, August 27, 2003). I have no record of Dr. W. Ramsahoye withdrawing his statement. (Curiously, Mr Granger never challenged his statement or requested that his medical license be withdrawn on the grounds of him being mentally incompetent.)

I now cite Professor Perry Mars (Professor of Africana Studies, Wayne State University): "The 1969 Rupununi Uprising, for instance, represented an open armed rebellion among

Amerindians demanding secession of the hinterland region where this group was concentrated. The brutal suppression that followed saw an untold number either killed or migrated to neighbouring Venezuela, which was said to have been complicit in the rebellion (\*2).” This paper was cited by Ms Joy Moncrieffe’s regional Background paper for the UNDP’s Human Development Report 2004 (See Table 5 on page 46, \*3). In the competitive world of Academia, feeble minds do not achieve Professorial status.

The prestigious **US Library of Congress (1992)** document (\*4) states: “With **Venezuelan** backing, several prominent ranching families and Amerindian followers in the southern part of the disputed region began an **uprising**. The rebels launched a surprise attack on the police outpost at Lethem on January 2, 1969, and several policemen were killed. **The government flew police and military forces to the region with orders to raze everything. Only livestock and cattle were spared.**” This polite description fits in very well with those of the other sources. This US library of Congress source is most credible. The writers would not deliberately mislead their own American Congressmen and Senators (Gentlemen, You are free to take this up with Ambassador Mr. R. Bullen, when you go to apply for a US visa).

The other witnesses were the numerous indigenous peoples who told their story to Mr Damon Corrie, and who commissioned a study to document the allegations (\*5). These stories could not be coming from ‘feeble minds’, but rather from tortured souls. It is rather callous and unfair to dismiss the eloquent and heartfelt writings of Mr G. Marco, who saw the good and the ugly (and still recalls the horrors of that time so vividly) as a ‘feeble mind’. How can one expect others (witnesses and victims) to come forward and tell their story if they are treated so disrespectfully?

The **US Library of Congress** (1992) document (\*6) put it really well when it states: “Although the rebellion was not a large affair, it exposed underlying tensions in the new state and the Amerindians marginalized role in the country’s political and social life.”

### Conclusion

One must therefore conclude that the people and sources who/that question the conduct of the army and security forces were/are credible witnesses in any court. The writings of the military and Govt/ personnel only raise more questions than providing answers. There are therefore too very credible sources (in addition to \*2, \*4, \*6) for the situation to be ignored any longer.

Despite what we (pro and cons) write, the only way we can remove this cloud of suspicion that hangs over the military/security forces for its work in the Rupununi is for there to be an outside, UN, enquiry into the incident. All would be given due process. That seems only fair.

Mr. Damon Corrie is willing to go to the World Court (\*5), what is wrong with accepting his challenge? The Guyanese people should not be afraid of the truth.

### References:

\*1. Odeen Ishmael. [http://www.guyanaca.com/features/trail\\_diplomacy\\_pt5.html](http://www.guyanaca.com/features/trail_diplomacy_pt5.html)

\*2 Perry Mars. Journal of Peace Research (London), Vol. 38, No.3, pp353-372, 2001.

\*3 Joy Moncrieffe.

[http://hdr.undp.org/docs/publications/background\\_papers/2004/HDR2004\\_Joy\\_moncrieffe.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/docs/publications/background_papers/2004/HDR2004_Joy_moncrieffe.pdf)

\*4 US Library of Congress, Countries studies, Guyana, Relations with Venezuela

<http://www.country-studies.com/guyana/relations-with-venezuela.html>

\*5 PanTribal Confederacy <http://www.pantribalconfederacy.com/confederacy/report1.php>

\*6 US library of Congress, Country Studies, Guyana,

<http://www.country-studies.com/guyana/independence-and-the-burnham-era.html>

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