

**PARTITION OR PERISH: EUSI KWAYANA'S PECULIAR  
SOLUTION TO GUYANA'S RACE PROBLEM:**

**50 YEARS LATER**

Estherine Adams

University of Guyana History

[estherine2000@yahoo.com](mailto:estherine2000@yahoo.com)

Shammane Joseph Jackson

University of Guyana

[sham\\_joseph@yahoo.com](mailto:sham_joseph@yahoo.com)

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Every time Guyana experience a change of Government or suffered a spike in the crime rate, especially when one group feels that they are being marginalized, there is a call for partition. When the British gained control of Dutch Guiana in September 1803, many Dutch planters wanted Berbice to remain a separate Dutch colony. In the 1960s as the British prepared to relinquish formal control of British Guiana, there was another call for partition. The call for such a separation was heard in 1992 when a new government came into office, and in 1997 when the elections were won by the governing PPP this call for separation was even louder. The same call for partition is still being sounded with the ascension to office of the new coalition government.

With the popularity of the internet and social networking sites, the call for partition has risen to new heights. For instance there was a petition online asking for the partition of Guyana on a private Facebook account, accompanied by an already partitioned map of Guyana. It received twenty votes in favour of such an idea. There was also the same number of likes. However, thirty five persons shared it on their Facebook pages. Thus, the idea of partition in present day Guyana is not alien to most. The idea of partitioning modern Guyana can be attributed to a call made by Eusi Kwayana in 1961 as a solution to the race problem the country was experiencing.

It can be granted that the concept of partition means different things to different people. Here, two definitions of partition are going to be used. According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary the word 'partition' means (especially with reference to a country) "the action or state of dividing or being divided into parts".<sup>1</sup> Further, from a political science perspective, "a partition should be understood as an externally proposed and imposed fresh border cut through at least one community's national homeland, creating at least two separate units under different sovereigns and authorities."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Angus Stevenson, et al (ed.). Concise Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 886.

<sup>2</sup> Brendan O'Leary, "Partition: definition, types, justification, explanation, and assessment." Paper presented at the Mapping frontiers final conference, Armagh, Northern Ireland, 19 January 2006. p. 1

When the term “partition” was used by Eusi Kwayana, he also gave his definition of the term. His idea of partition in the Guyanese context was “one area for the Indians, one area for the Blacks and one for those who want to live together”.<sup>3</sup> Evidently, Kwayana’s idea for partition was twofold, in that he was not only referring to the physical separation of Guyana but also its racial separation. His suggestion summarized the thoughts of many Guyanese then, who believed that if each group ‘ruled themselves’ it was going to end the racism that was becoming more and more obvious in the society. They did not like the idea of having leaders who did not ‘look like them’ nor share their ‘political beliefs’. This kind of belief was already in full display by the middle of the twentieth century, when countries such as India, Cyprus, Germany, Korea, and Vietnam had completed their partitioning —partitions whose effects still resound to this day.

According to O’Leary, these were all national partitions, where relatively homogeneous homelands were divided. These partitions were generally caused by intra-national civil wars accompanied by large-scale interstate wars (or cold wars or foreign interventions) that stabilize the lines of control. These partitions produced ‘schizophrenic units’ which claimed to be the true personification of the nation, and which sought its reconsolidation in their image. National partitions are initially characterized by mutual non-recognition by the respective regimes, though this may give way to reconciliation and synchronicity. Full democratization in the parts of such a divided nation will usually lead to a reunion movement to reverse partition.<sup>4</sup>

This was the first type of partition that Kwayana advocated for Guyana, where each group would have had their own nation. At the time of his suggestion there were disturbing concerns related to position and “recognition of the ethno-cultural communities which had expressed fears of discrimination and domination as well as charges of skewed state policies regarding resource allocation”.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between the two major groups of Guyanese fifty years ago was so discordant that it was not an easy task to create an outline for a government that would have accommodated the different claims of each who were looking for impartiality and representation,

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<sup>3</sup> “King Drops – Withdraws as Candidate in Protest Against New Burnham-Jagan Move,” Daily Chronicle, 23 July 1961.

<sup>4</sup> O’Leary, pp. 11-12

<sup>5</sup> Ralph R. Premdas, “The Guyana Ethnic Quagmire: Problems and Solutions for Reconciliation”, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, Volume 10, Issue 2, (2004), pp. 251-268.

the way they saw it. Due to this lack of consensus Eusi Kwayana outlined this plan which he believed would have brought “honour and peace.”<sup>6</sup>

The polarization of the races which translated into the politics of the country was believed to have been exacerbated by the economic and developmental policies implemented by the new People’s Progressive Party (PPP) government in power. Leo Despres has concluded that the PPP developed an extensive programme of “apanjaat politics” between 1957 and 1961 designed to mobilize the support of the Indian community, not only through normal campaign politics but also “by the use of legislation and government agencies.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Despres, this was manifested in several ways. For instance, the PPP mobilized the support of Indian businessmen by liberalizing trade with Eastern European countries and Japan by channeling these trade contracts through the predominately Indian Junior Chamber of Commerce rather than the predominately Portuguese Senior Chamber of Commerce, and by giving representation on relevant government committees to the Junior rather than the Senior Chamber of Commerce. These policies enabled Indian businessmen to import cheap goods from Eastern Europe and Japan and thereby compete more effectively with the older and better established Portuguese and expatriate firm.<sup>8</sup>

In the public service, the political support of Indian teachers was mobilized behind the PPP through the passage of a bill authorizing the government to assume direct control of fifty-one denominational schools that had been constructed with government money. Indian teachers were opposed to denominational control of schools since most of the schools were controlled by Christian denominations that had a history of discrimination against non-Christian Indian teachers. The PPP had been opposed to denominational control of schools since 1953 for ideological reasons, but the passage of the bill three months before the 1961 election indicates

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<sup>6</sup> “King Drops – Withdraws as Candidate in Protest Against New Burnham-Jagan Move,” Daily Chronicle, 23 July, 1961.

<sup>7</sup> Leo A. Despres, Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana. (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1967), pp. 229-230. For a detailed description of this programme see Despres, pp. 228-251.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 230-234.

that the bill was designed to mobilize the support of Indian teachers and, to a lesser extent, Indians in general.<sup>9</sup>

The PPP also mobilized the support of Indian peasants. This according to Despres, was done by devoting a large proportion of the government's development capital to agricultural development projects which primarily benefited Indians. The development plan that was in operation when the PPP came into office had allocated 25.5 per cent of the planned development expenditure to agriculture. In the first two years in office, however, the PPP spent 43 per cent of its development funds on agriculture. By way of comparison, only 19 per cent was spent on urban housing and less than two per cent on industrial development, the two areas of most benefit to Africans. In the development plan for 1960-1964, 52 per cent of the expenditure was allocated for agricultural development and only seven per cent for urban housing and four per cent for industrial development.<sup>10</sup>

In defense of the PPP policy, the leaders pointed out that the 1957-1961 programme was seen as the first step in a larger programme that would eventually turn Guyana into an industrialised, socialist country.<sup>11</sup> The PPP's programme, however, could also be interpreted as part of a normal democratic political strategy of rewarding groups that had voted for the party in the last election and doing favours for groups whose support the party could reasonably expect in the next election. Since these groups were made up almost exclusively of Indians, however, this strategy had the effect of increasing racial polarization and tensions within the country.<sup>12</sup>

It is within this scenario of seeming discrimination and racial polarization that Kwayana's last days as a politician in the early national movement were spent. This is important to consider as it helps to explain many of the political decisions he took during this period as well as the changes that gradually occurred in his political outlook and ideological stance from one that was all inclusive to one that was predominantly African in nature.

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Newman, "The Economic Future of British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies, Volume 9 (September 1960), pp. 263-269.

<sup>10</sup> Despres, pp. 245-246.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas J. Spinner, A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945-1983. (Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1984.) p. 165.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p, 166.

This is also the early period of the African nationalist movement. We have seen that this phase begins with the independence of Ghana, but there may also have been the realisation of the cultural vitality of the Indians of British Guiana and the relative cultural deprivation of the Africans of British Guiana. By 1957, most of the African Guianese concentrated in the urban centres of the coastal plains had become mostly a landless, fixed wage-earning group that dominated the public service, whereas the Indians were mainly a landed peasantry.

If anything, the 1957 elections had shown that Indians and Africans were highly polarized between the Jaganite PPP and the Burnhamite PPP. According to a poll conducted by Landis, ninety-eight per cent of the Indians who voted did so for the Jaganite PPP, while ninety-one per cent of Africans voted for the Burnhamite PPP.<sup>13</sup> This suggests, therefore, that Kwayana saw the PNC as an avenue through which he would be able to organise the Afro-Guyanese population. For Eusi Kwayana, the PNC would be the vehicle for apan jaat, African-style.

The PNC, including Kwayana, became increasingly cognizant of the threat of Indo-racial domination and accused the Jagan government of attempting to replace “white supremacy with Indian supremacy.” This was particularly evident in the unequal distribution of state resources in favour of the Indo-Guyanese population and in the rapid influx of Indo-Guyanese into the civil service and teaching profession.<sup>14</sup> Partly as a consequence of the urgings of PNC leaders, a climate of fear and antagonism was engendered amongst the Afro-Guyanese, who felt threatened by the competition from the Indo-Guyanese for these positions. Kwayana favoured an all-out campaign against this threat of racial domination by Indians that he felt was aided and abetted by the PPP.

For Kwayana, because of the multi-racial nature of the Guianese society, the race problem that existed was a real one and that the leaders were pretending otherwise.<sup>15</sup> He held the view that because of the level of distrust that existed between the two major groups in the society, Indo-Guyanese would never trust an African leader, and the Afro-Guyanese would never trust an Indian leader. Because of this he felt that “any attempt of the one to rule the other will lead to

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<sup>13</sup>Joseph B. Landis, “Race Relations and Politics in Guyana.” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1971. pp. 159-160

<sup>14</sup>Maurice St. Pierre, Anatomy of Resistance Anti-Colonialism in Guyana 1823-1966 (London: Macmillan Educational Limited, 1999), p. 156.

<sup>15</sup>Daily Chronicle, 20 July 1961.

blood baths.”<sup>16</sup> With the East Indians as the largest and most united group, he felt that a special solution was need for the Guianese situation to avoid oppression, especially of the Africans.<sup>17</sup> This special solution was drafted by Kwayana and Vigilance and entailed the following:

- (1) “Joint and equal Prime Ministership according to LAW between the Leaders of the Indian and the African people.
- (2) An Independent watch committee established by LAW made up of people of all races and especially the minorities, to supervise the spending of Government Funds and the benefits derived by various races. The same committee will keep a watch over jobs and employment at all levels to see that justice is done to all races.
- (3) A socialist system without foreign links and a state neutral BY LAW, of Russia and the U.S.A. By socialism must be understood a system of cooperatives in all fields, existing private enterprises; production for needs; respect for all religions and for the religious traditions of our people. If the power drunk Jagan, wanting to be top dog as usual should agree to this plan, all well and good. If he rejected it, we should refuse to be ruled by him and call for division a of the country, before independence into three zones – an African Zone, an Indian Zone and a free Zone in which those who wish to live with other races may do so. The cities will be free.”<sup>18</sup>

The plan primarily advocated ‘joint and equal Prime Ministerships’ with partition as a last resort. He felt that it would bring equality of rights and power for Indians and Africans in the society and end all cause of racial antagonism, as it asked no race to be the ‘slave of the other’. Kwayana’s plan indicated a drastic change in ideology. In 1953 he, along with the PPP, advocated a unified British Guiana where all races were integrated. He was now advocating something completely different, even though this was to be a last resort: a separation of the country along racial lines. That a person who had always been such a strong advocate for integration and unification to now suggest such a solution, is a clear indication of the dire situation in which Guiana had found herself as it related to race relations.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Eusi Kwayana, The Morning After (Georgetown: Guyana-Caribbean Politics Publication, 2005), p.115-116.

<sup>18</sup> Vigilance was later identified as H.H. Nicholson, a London educated physical scientist and archaeologist.

Kwayana's proposal drew outrage from most quarters. He was called a 'mad man'<sup>19</sup>, a racist non-nationalist,<sup>20</sup> among other things. The strongest criticism came from the PNC, which quickly issued a statement condemning the plan. The Party's Executive Council held a meeting on 21 July, 1961, where it was unanimously decided that Kwayana should be expelled from the party, for "proven anti-party activities."<sup>21</sup> According to the statement, his plan for British Guiana, "as set out in his published statement cannot be accepted or subscribed" by the PNC, which "does not advocate racism." It condemned his proposal to partition the country along racial lines. The party felt that such a move would be the 'road to more serious conflict.'<sup>22</sup>

Not all countries that followed this course towards partition have procured the peace they envisioned. For instance, in 1947 the partitioning of India led to the creation of Pakistan for the Muslims, while India would remain largely for Hindus. The leader of the Muslim league Jinnah, simply wished to use the demand for a separate state as a bargaining chip to win greater power for Muslims. The way India and Pakistan came into being was simply chaotic. Partition was accompanied by the largest mass migration to have occurred on the continent, some 10 million. Approximately, one million civilians died in the accompanying riots and local-level fighting, particularly in the western region of Punjab which was cut in two by the partition.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of Cyprus, there is only one word that can describe its partition - complex. Cyprus was divided into North and South in 1974. This internal partition was organized to promote the independence of a particular group that has had no previously recognized jurisdiction. Its partition was executed by the Turkish army. In Cyprus, democratic mobilization occurred shortly before decolonization, and competitive pressures among Greek Cypriot politicians made it less likely that the 1960 accommodation with Turkish Cypriots would be maintained. Nevertheless, tensions between North and South are very low, in part because the partition has been a cause of peace.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Daily Chronicle, 20 July 1961.

<sup>20</sup> Daily Chronicle, 23 July 1953.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 31 July 1953

<sup>22</sup> New Nation, 21 July 1961

<sup>23</sup> Paul R. Brass. "The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946-47: Means, Methods, and Purposes", Journal of Genocide Research Vol. 5 No. 1. pp. 71-101.

<sup>24</sup> O'Leary, pp. 11-12

However, both sides remain pervaded by hostile attitudes, biases, histories, and myths. Moreover, almost every plausible solution, including the Annan Plan<sup>25</sup> that proposes to unite the island also incorporates the group-based and gridlock-prone characteristics of “the conflict-generating 1960 constitution”.<sup>26</sup> Presently, Cyprus solution solves little and creates risks. “According to Hoffmeister, “a better plan to create a permanent peace is to recognize a much smaller North, and bring all sides including Turkey into the European Union. This would create peace, give most Greek Cypriot refugees their land and homes back, and restore all freedoms throughout the island.”<sup>27</sup> These two examples, shows clearly that the physical partition of a country in order to solve ethnic and political differences comes with tremendous problems which may never see an end.

While the partition of Guyana based on ethnicity was not a guarantee that peace would have prevailed, as both groups were guilty of the inciting and escalating the confrontations during the 1962-1964 period, it was precisely a situation such as this that Kwayana foresaw when he made his suggestion. In various parts of the country, East Indians and Africans attacked each other violently. According to Jagan, “the toll for the 1964 disturbances was heavy. About 2,668 families involving approximately 5,000 persons were forced to move their homes and settle in communities of their own racial group. The large majority were Indo-Guianese. Over 1,400 homes were destroyed by fire. Damage to property was estimated at about \$4.3 million and the number of displaced persons unemployed reached 1,342. It should be noted that in July 1964, there was a bomb explosion on the Son Chapman a river launch, owed by a PNC supporter. Forty persons of African descent were killed. It was perceived as a reprisal for rapes and murder of Indo-Guianese women and children in Wismar, the bauxite mining town.”<sup>28</sup> It should be

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<sup>25</sup> The Annan Plan was a United Nations proposal to resolve the Cyprus dispute. The proposal suggested restructuring the Republic of Cyprus as a "United Republic of Cyprus", which would be a federation of two states. It was revised five times before being put to the people of Cyprus in a referendum. The proposal was supported by 65% of Turkish Cypriots, but only 24% of Greek Cypriots.

<sup>26</sup> The Constitution of Cyprus is a document, ratified on August 16, 1960, that serves as the framework for the Cypriot government. It was drafted after the country won its independence in 1959 and is Cyprus's first and only constitution to date. The Cyprus Constitution of 1960 has been amended 9 times the 1st Amendment taking place in 1990 and the last in April 28th 2016. ("Cyprus". CIA World Fact book 2013.)

<sup>27</sup> Frank Hoffmeister, Legal aspects of the Cyprus problem: Annan Plan and EU accession. Boston: E. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2009. p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Cheddi B. Jagan. Forbidden Freedom: Story of British Guiana. (New York: International Publishers, 1954), pp. 23-25.

noted that there are several other accounts of the events that occurred during this period that are not in agreement with Jagan's analysis of the situation.

In the view of Prem Misir, statements made by some politicians, the private media houses, and hate literature, did influence the formation of people's perception of each other. Further, many believed then and now that the Indian leadership pursues racial dominance against Africans; Indians do not accept Africans as racially equal; Africans are marginalized; Africans do not trust the Indian political leadership; Indians own and control the wealth of this country; Hinduism is a racist ideology; there is a Hindu plot to marginalize and oppress Africans in Guyana; the current Government is an Indian Government; Africans will be better off with the PNC; only African youngsters are unemployed, etc. These remarks were and are still regurgitated daily and are presented as if they were/are legitimate. Most if not all of these remarks are rooted in a high degree of falsity. Some private mass media and politicians believe that all these remarks represent the true picture in Guyana. In the end, the remarks cited above produce false perceptions and a reality filled with untruths.<sup>29</sup>

There are hundreds of books and articles based on the "East Indian-African" relationship in Guyana. All of the writings on this relationship agreed in part that the perceived animosity between these two groups at the time were due to ethnic perception among them which emerged from the divisions based on colour, religion, place of residence, and occupation. It is the belief of some that these problems started with the white colonists and were further perpetuated by early nationalist leaders. In Guyana, the policies of ethnic rule changed from politics based on ethnic preference to politics based on ethnic dominance. Both groups became envious of each other's successes. Further, there existed a high degree of racial exclusivity in residential concentration of the population in villages, communities, and in broader geographic areas.<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, none of the literature suggested partition as a solution to the problems they identified. Most are in agreement that the groups should be left to intermingle and develop their own solutions to their own problems. Although the cultural structure of the Indian and African people might appear to be distinctive, there are more common values between the two than

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<sup>29</sup> Prem Misir "The Social Construction of Race-Ethnic Conflict in Guyana", Paper Presented at Social Sciences Conference, University of Guyana, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Moses Seenarine, "Conflict between East-Indian and Blacks in Trinidad and Guyana - Socially, Economically and Politically", May 18, 2000.

appear at first sight. For instance, both accept the British social system and most of its values; sadly, however, they see them as being superior to their own national cultural values. Race and ethnicity will infinitely continue to be central to the Guyanese definition of self.

Within each group in Guyana there are conflicts. For the East Indians it was the more widely known Hindu-Muslim conflict, which continues to persist. There are many examples of relationships being destroyed because of the differences in religion. Amongst the Africans the problem is based on degree of Blackness. These issues may seem inconsequential but they would have easily been exacerbated when coupled with the problems of partition. Using India as a continued example, it must be noted that India is characterized by more ethnic and religious groups than most other countries of the world. Aside from the much noted 2000-odd castes, there are eight "major" religions, 15-odd languages spoken in various dialects in 22 states and nine union territories, and a substantial number of tribes and sects. Three ethnic or religious conflicts have stood out of late: two occurred in the states of "Assam and Punjab"; another, the more known Hindu-Muslim struggle persistently lingers.<sup>31</sup> The Assam problem is primarily ethnic; the Punjab problem (Sikh-Hindu conflict of August 1980) is based on both religious and regional conflicts, while the Hindu-Muslim problem is predominantly religious.<sup>32</sup>

Cyprus was already a rather complex problem. There are two communities on the island: the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, both claiming to have their own sovereign states. The Greek Cypriot state is recognized broadly by the international community, while only Turkey recognizes the Turkish Cypriots. The problem has become more entangled with three developments in the last decade. Firstly, free elections have brought a change in leadership on the Turkish side but not on the Greek side. The second development is the "Annan Plan Referendum"<sup>33</sup>, in which the Turkish Cypriots overwhelmingly voted for unification and the establishment of a new state, while Greek Cypriots voted against it. Thirdly, the EU accepted the

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<sup>31</sup>Varshney Ashutosh, "Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in India" Cultural Survival, (1983). p. 283.

<sup>32</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed. The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed: Unravelling the 1947 Tragedy through Secret British Reports and First Person Account. (New Delhi: RUPA Publications, 2011.), pp. 254-258.

<sup>33</sup>The Annan Plan Referendum was held in the Republic of Cyprus and the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on 24 April 2004. The two communities were asked whether they approved of the fifth revision of the United Nations proposal for reuniting the island, which had been divided since 1974. While it was approved by 65% of Turkish Cypriots, it was rejected by 76% of Greek Cypriots. Turnout for the referendum was high at 89% among Greek Cypriots and 87% among Turkish Cypriots, which was taken as indicative of great interest in the issue on the part of the electorates. ("What do the results of the referendum in Cyprus show?", International Bulletin, Issue 1, 21 May 2004. pp. 1-6.)

territorially and politically divided island as a member. As a result of the discovery of significant gas reserves around the island, the area has become an additional source of tension for Cypriots, Turks and Greeks. In 2013, they had a more complex problem in the Eastern Mediterranean than they had decades ago.<sup>34</sup>

Eusi Kwayana suggested partition as an effective way of dealing with the ethnic tensions that Guyana was enduring fifty years ago. His suggestion was not popular amongst nationalists, and as a result he and his idea suffered because he chose to announce his plan at a critical juncture in Guyanese history. Eusi Kwayana's partition was intended as separation of the groups in "conflict into ethnically homogeneous areas capable of self-defense and enjoying some form of self-government (ranging from regional autonomy to formal independence)"<sup>35</sup>. Presently, this type of partition has become increasingly important in policy circles, as several observers, including the United Nations, have proposed it as the ultimate solution to the ongoing ethno-sectarian wars in many countries.<sup>36</sup> The UN Partition Plan for Palestine<sup>37</sup> is a great example of such a policy.

However, do we qualify for this type of partition? If we did, this qualification was thrown out due to the many ethnic alliances which were created:

- The union of Indian and African forces unleashed against colonial domination is another case in point, e.g., the frequent criticisms launched by the Indian Opinion, the organ of the British Guiana Indian Association, against the colonial government; Africans challenging the anti-education principles directed against Indians in the 1876 Education law; the demand for Indian languages to be introduced in schools; and the Court of Policy

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<sup>34</sup> "The Ethnic Conflict in Cyprus is Turning into a Greater Game", Daily News, (12 January 2013), pp. 1-6.

<sup>35</sup> Costantino Pischedda, "Partition as a Solution to Ethnic Conflict", The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs, (20 November, 2008), pp. 103-122.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations. The Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem Part V (1989 – 2000). Prepared for, and under the guidance of, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. (New York: United Nations, 2014), pp. 1-80.

<sup>37</sup> The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was a proposal developed by the United Nations, which recommended a partition with Economic Union of Mandatory Palestine to follow the termination of the British Mandate. On 29 November 1947, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending the adoption and implementation of the Plan as Resolution 181(II). The resolution recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem.

comprising members from many ethnic groups made crown lands available to both Indians and Africans.<sup>38</sup>

- The development of institutional working-class unity in 1946, in the form of the PAC, became solidified in 1950 with the formation of the PPP and manifested by its victory at the 1953 polls.<sup>39</sup>

Jocelyn Hubbard, in addressing whether Guyana was ridden with racial conflict said: “It is by any standards a remarkable fact that in a competitive semi-feudal society such as British Guiana with restricted social and economic opportunities and fewer jobs than potential workers, very few serious physical inter-racial conflicts arose between the ethnic groups constituting the population”.<sup>40</sup>

### Fifty Years Later: Guyanese Perception of Partition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

While the call for partition as issued some fifty years ago was generally rejected, a survey was done with approximately three hundred Guyanese from the three counties, to ascertain whether the position still stood today. The results from this survey suggested that 98.3 per cent of the persons surveyed do not believe that partition is the way to deal with the race problems. There was however 1.6 per cent of the respondents who believed that it is important that we separate because “our own people would treat us better”. While the 98.3 per cent of the respondents agreed that there is a race problem in Guyana, they believed that the problem could be dealt with in different ways, not including partition. Some of their suggestions included constant dialogues in informal and formal settings to debate and analyze the issues so as to arrive at good and just conclusions on issues affecting each group, a “truth and reconciliation” commission similar to what South Africa had, and education.

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<sup>38</sup> Misir, pp. 1-10

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> H.J.M. Hubbard. Race and Guyana: The Anatomy of a Colonial Enterprise. (Georgetown: n.p.), 1969. p.

		Essequibo	Demerara	Berbice	Total	%
Age range	18-28	35	33	21	89	<b>29.6</b>
	29-39	33	21	46	100	<b>33.3</b>
	40-50	11	18	17	46	<b>15.3</b>
	50 and above	21	28	16	65	<b>21.6</b>
Ethnicity	African	15	43	32	90	<b>30</b>
	Indian	38	17	31	86	<b>28.6</b>
	Amerindian	8	5	12	25	<b>8.3</b>
	Chinese	9	3	5	17	<b>5.6</b>
	Mixed	35	32	20	87	<b>29</b>
Education	Primary	23	15	22	60	<b>20</b>
	Secondary	61	59	38	158	<b>52.6</b>
	Tertiary	16	36	40	92	<b>30.6</b>
Professional/ employment status	Employed for wages	16	51	30	97	<b>32.3</b>
	Self employed	20	10	40	70	<b>23.3</b>
	Unemployed	11	7	10	28	<b>9.3</b>
	Homemaker	13	6	10	29	<b>9.6</b>
	Student	27	12	0	39	<b>13</b>
	Military	0	5	0	5	<b>1.6</b>
	Retired	3	9	10	22	<b>7.3</b>
Do you believe Guyana has a race problem	Yes	90	96	100	286	<b>95.3</b>
	No	10	4	0	14	<b>4.6</b>
Do you believe Guyana should be partitioned?	Yes	5	0	0	5	<b>1.6</b>
	No	95	100	100	295	<b>98.3</b>

Table 1: Guyanese Perception of Partition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

It is evident that a race problem, as was recognized by Kwayana fifty years ago, still exists in Guyana today. What is also evident is the fact that the Guyanese populace still feel strongly against the partitioning of the country as a solution to the problem. It is the general sentiment that we are still ‘one people, one nation, one destiny’, and that “together we can solve our problems.” When one examines the problems that accompanied the partition of the countries discussed, it can be understood why the general populace would be reluctant to endorse such a plan. What is unmistakable though, is that the race problem in Guyana, although many times veiled, is still present, and unless a serious examination of this problem is undertaken, we may

very well arrive at the point where Kwayana's peculiar solution for the Guyanese situation is the only answer.

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