

West Kingston Commission of Enquiry Recommends that Several Police Officers be Relieved of Operational Commands

The residents of Tivoli Gardens have long accused the police of the Mobile Reserve of carrying out extra judicial killings, wholesale destruction of property and other acts of brutality. The recently released Report of the West Kingston Commission of Enquiry 2016, which documents the circumstances that led to the bloodbath, also lends credibility to the community's claim.

On 24 May 2010, at least 74 civilians were killed in the Tivoli Gardens Massacre by a combined force of about 800 soldiers and 370 police officers. They were on a mission to capture gang leader Christopher "Dudus" Coke, who allegedly was barricaded in the community under the protection of his armed confederates. Dudus was being sought for extradition to the United States for drugs trafficking and gunrunning.



The West Kingston Commission of Enquiry has recommended that serving police officers, against whom adverse findings have been made in relation to the May 2010 Operation in Tivoli Gardens, be relieved of any operational commands they may hold. These are among a series of measures recommended by the commission, which examined reports from witnesses, and members of the security forces over a 90-day period.

Mobile Reserve

The report states that most of the accusations of extra-judicial killings were levelled at members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) who entered Tivoli Gardens on the afternoon of 24 May 2010. The commissioners say they have identified the units to which the perpetrators belonged, as elements of the Mobile Reserve. Additionally, the report says where the accusations of extra-judicial killings on the part of the security forces were found to be credible, and where persons were identified as being in dereliction of duty or administratively or operationally incompetent, these persons should never again be allowed to lead or otherwise participate in internal security operations.

However, despite the report having admitted that

there were extra-judicial killings as well as the mass arbitrary and unlawful detentions of more than 4,000 young men, there is no call for the perpetrators of these acts to be punished other than by their exclusion from participation in future security operations. Indeed, the commissioners specifically said this measure is not recommended as punishment, but as a protective move against similar abuses of power, in future operations.

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This is unacceptable. The Jamaica state security forces acted as officially sanctioned death squads and there is no justice until the guilty parties are tried and punished with appropriate severity. And not merely those with whose actual fingers were on the triggers, but their corrupt political masters, who are, in many ways, the real guilty men.

International Criminal Court

The commission report does speak of an apology and compensation for victims. This is the least the Jamaican state can do and, while we would encourage those affected to claim for compensation, we must be quite clear that such an apology and financial compensation is too little, too late. As a signatory to the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court (though not ratified) the government can, under Article 1 2(3) of the ICC Statute, invite the ICC to exercise jurisdiction over the matter.

We believe that this is the ONLY way to ensure that those who had command responsibility for the massacre are brought to book. This is the only way to satisfactorily resolve the issues of this, the worst mass killing in the Caribbean since the 1865 Morant Bay massacre..

IS THERE NO JUSTICE FOR MURDER, EVEN AFTER 36 YEARS?

Justice for Walter Rodney!

The Commission of Inquiry's (COI) Report (Feb. 2016) found that the Guyana Government was directly involved in Walter Rodney's assassination on June 13, 1980. Tell the Guyana Government - 36 years later - Enough is Enough!

On 13 June 1980, a car bomb exploded, killing Walter Rodney. The government of Guyana contended that Walter Rodney was responsible for his own death – the claim was that he planned to use the bomb concealed in a walkie-talkie to blow up the prison, but that it accidentally exploded. The Rodney family and Walter Rodney's brother Donald Rodney, who survived the explosion, vehemently denied the government's claim. Individuals and organizations around the world protested the assassination. More than 30,000 Guyanese and international supporters attended his funeral in what was described as an “astonishing display of racial solidarity and defiance”.

Justice

After decades of demands for investigation and justice by the Rodney family and others, an official public Presidential Commission of Inquiry (COI) into the death of Walter Rodney was finally authorized in 2014 by then President Donald Ramotar of Guyana. The COI was tasked with finding out the truth about the death of Walter Rodney. The two-year process “unearthed a wealth of evidence” that is detailed in the COI Report, dated 8 February 2016.

Assassin

The COI Report concluded that the assassin Gregory Smith was an agent of the State. Unbeknown to Walter Rodney, Smith placed the bomb in the walkie-talkie and remotely triggered it, resulting in Rodney's death. It further concluded that Smith acted under the direction of the highest echelons of the PNC government. The Report specifically identified officials who played major roles in the conspiracy to kill Walter Rodney: then Prime Minister Burnham himself; Mr Laurie Lewis, at the time Head of Police Special Branch, Head of Immigration (including the Passport Office) and later Commissioner of Police; Major General Norman McClean, then Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defence Force; and Mr Cecil “Skip” Roberts, then Deputy Commissioner of Police and Crime Chief.

Cover up

On 8 February 2016, the COI Report was submitted to President David Granger, who had attacked the findings of the COI, disparaged witnesses and the laudable Commissioners, challenged the process, and the COI Report has not been made officially public. Highly egregious is

the Guyana government's celebration of Burnham within its 50th anniversary celebrations, with President Granger lauding Burnham as a leader with an “exemplary record” and “recall[ing] his efforts to restore social cohesion; to promote political inclusion and to nurture national unity.” This is a revisionist account of Guyana's history.

Enough is enough! Why the continued cover-up of the staggering facts and findings in the COI Report?

Public Meeting

Walter Rodney Socialist Historian & Political Activist

On 23rd June 2016, the Socialist History Society, with the support of CLS and the UCU, organised a public meeting at the Marx Memorial Library in Clerkenwell entitled *Walter Rodney - Socialist Historian & Political Activist*. Following talks by Cecil Gutzmore and Leland De Cambra, the meeting voted unanimously to demand that the Government of Guyana:

1. **Officially release the COI Report.**
2. **Proceed with implementing its recommendations.**
3. **Change the ‘manner of death’ on the death certificate of Walter Rodney from “death by misadventure” to “murder”.**
4. **Change the profession on the death certificate of Walter Rodney from “unemployed” to “Historian/Professor”.**
5. **Overturn the conviction of Donald Rodney and expunge any related criminal history.**



Cecil Gutzmore and Leland De Cambra speaking at the public meeting, Steve Cushion in the chair

Belize economy in crisis

An international tribunal at the end of June ruled that the government of Belize has to pay Lord Ashcroft more than 12% of the country's GDP as compensation for nationalising his telecommunications company. What's more, His Lordship is still in dispute over more details, to squeeze the last drop of blood out of the Belizean economy, which already has a 40% poverty rate and which he risks pushing over the edge into recession.

In August of 2009, the government of Belize nationalized the Belize Telemedia Limited (BTL) from a group of companies controlled by British billionaire and former Chairman of the Tory Party Michael Ashcroft. Immediately, a foreign arbitration claim was filed against Belize claiming US\$200 million. This led to seven years of litigation and court battles that for the most part favoured Lord Ashcroft. As a result the economy of the country is now being threatened, as Ashcroft has demanded that Belize must pay \$35 million in US currency towards settlement of the BTL acquisition. However, the Central Bank of Belize has warned that if such request is approved, the country faces devaluation of the Belize dollar.

International Monetary Fund

The International Monetary Fund report for this year on Belize came with a warning. It indicated that international reserves could decline to uncomfortable levels, especially if compensation for the nationalized utilities is paid and repatriated.

Belize's economy grew by only 1% last year and shrank by 2% during the first quarter of this year. These recent figures in the Belizean economy are a clear indication that meeting the demands of the Ashcroft group would put Belize's economy at great risks

Arbitration

The first payment, as part of the arbitration award towards the nationalization of BTL, was made on 13 July. The payment consisted of US\$29.5 million and BZD\$134.9 million for compensation,

plus £827,000 in legal fees, and 33,000 Euros in arbitration costs. However, the Ashcroft group has now indicated that the payment made in Belize dollars, must now be in US currency instead. According to the Central bank, this is a demand that the government cannot afford.

“The Central Bank would not be able to provide the additional US\$70 million and to do so would mean that Belize's US dollar position would shrink to US\$159 million. That is the same as 1.5 months of imports, which is half the international benchmark of three months and this will be catastrophic to our economy,” said the governor of the Belize Central Bank.

This is an unacceptable state of affairs in a country which has 40% poverty rate. “In the absence of foreign exchange, our economy suffocates, resulting in increased poverty, and risk that we won't be able to meet obligations to other creditors and trading partners,” he said.

Unacceptable

Meanwhile the value of deposits in Ashcroft's Belize Bank International fell by 75% in six months as it got caught in a US tax-evasion crackdown. Ashcroft's political links in Belize are with the People's United Party (PUP), which lost control in 2008 to the United Democratic Party (UDP).

Pig's Head

Meanwhile the value of deposits in Ashcroft's Belize Bank International fell by 75% in six months as it got caught in a US tax-evasion crackdown. Ashcroft's political links in Belize are with the People's United Party (PUP), which lost control in 2008 to the United Democratic Party (UDP). He has a fortune estimated at £1.34bn after decades as an investor and deal-maker in businesses ranging from car auctions to cleaning services and offshore banking. He is best known in the UK as the former Conservative Party deputy chairman who fell out with David Cameron last year, when he co-wrote a biography of the former prime minister notable for its allegations of debauched student years, in particular an incident involving a pig's head.



A letter from the CLS President

Dear CLS members and supporters,

Greetings all!

As you may be aware we have just held our AGM for 2016. There are a few changes to our Executive Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing members for their contribution to the work of CLS over the years. The results of the election of officers were:

President: Luke Daniels

Treasurer: Raphael Andrews

General Secretary: Paula Lewis

Secretary: Steve Cushion

Co-opted members: Cauline Brathwaite and Frank Murray

The EC meets once a month and our monthly public meetings continue.

We have decided to continue our focus on:

1. Reparations for slavery and native genocide
2. Federation of the Caribbean
3. Support for Justice for Tivoli Gardens massacre

The last year was a very active and interesting one as we had a range of issues and topics for our regular Sunday meetings. Members of the executive participated in a number of events doing solidarity work. Please visit our website to get a flavour of the activities we have been engaged in.

We are not a funded organization nor do we have any paid officials; we depend on members and well-wishers to support our work. First-time members will receive a free copy of Richard Hart's pamphlet *The Abolition of Slavery*. You can fill in a membership form on our website and pay your subscription fee by PayPal, or you can send a cheque made payable to *Caribbean Labour Solidarity*, to our postal address: **CLS, 29 Myddelton Street, London EC1R 1UA.**

We aim to produce our bulletin *Cutlass* more regularly this year and it comes free with membership electronically - a fee of £1 is charged per hard copy. We will of course continue to take up issues and events that affect Caribbean people and those of Caribbean heritage living in London, as they arise.

Some of you may have attended the memorial event for the late Richard Hart. We have decided to hold an annual memorial lecture in his honour and for his massive contribution to the struggles of the working people of the Caribbean. In keeping with our mandate, we will be holding the first Richard Hart Memorial Lecture on Saturday, 5 November 2016.

We are holding a conference "For Tivoli Gardens" on Saturday, 24 September 2016.

We will keep you updated on our actions and any progress on these and other issues via our website and our bulletin, *Cutlass*. Please be sure to contact us if you can offer any help with any issues we are engaged with or that you would like to bring to our attention.

Luke Daniels

President, Caribbean Labour Solidarity

"Racism is a much more clandestine, much more hidden kind of phenomenon, but at the same time it's perhaps far more terrible than it's ever been." -

Angela Davis



Caribbean Labour Solidarity meets on the first Sunday in the month at 12 noon at Islington Pensioners Forum

**1A Providence Court, Providence Place,
London N1 0RN**

For more information or to join us, write to

**Caribbean Labour Solidarity
29 Myddelton Street EC1R 1AU**

or email CLS at info@cls-uk.org.uk

See our website at

<http://www.cls-uk.org.uk>

