

# The 8-December Murders in Surinam and United States Reactions During the Early 1980s

Date: 9 June 2006

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MA Thesis English Language and Culture

Specialisation: History of International Relations

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*To*

*Lida, Herman and Emmanuel*

*“Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.”*

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

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## **Introduction**

On 25 November 1975 Surinam became a sovereign state. Its former mother country, The Netherlands, made an agreement with Surinam concerning development aid. Surinam was to receive a golden handshake worth 3,5 billion Dutch guilders. Unfortunately, the received aid was invested in unrealistic and prestigious projects. Most of the financial aid fell prey to corruption. The Netherlands, as well as many other countries involved, lost their faith in the Surinamese government. Amongst the Surinamese themselves, the armed forces were the most dissatisfied with the government's policy.

On 25 February 1980 sixteen sergeants led by sergeant-major Desi Bouterse carried out a coup d'état. The international community were willing to accept the change of power, hoping that the corruption which had developed during the previous period of the so-called old politics would come to an end. Nevertheless, a seemingly hopeful situation soon turned hopeless. The initially moderate-minded military leaders became divided amongst themselves. Desi Bouterse became increasingly interested in left-wing ideologies. Bouterse and his advisors expounded left-wing policies which encountered great resistance from both the people and the National Military Council. Bouterse and his supporters increasingly felt as though they were slowly being driven into a corner. This growing anxiety eventually led to the brutal murder of fifteen of Surinam's most prominent members of society. These murders took place during the night of 8 December 1982 and are therefore known as the December murders.

The December murders were not just a local Surinamese concern. The political reorientation in Surinam and its attendant violence became an issue in international politics concerning not only the former mother country, The Netherlands, but possibly also the United

States of America. During the 1980s, one of American president Ronald Reagan's biggest concerns was to eliminate communism throughout the world. Considering the Latin American continent, he had most to fear from communist influence from the isle of Cuba. Surinam can be regarded as Cuba's doorway to mainland Latin America. In order to protect the Latin American hinterland from Cuban influence, Surinam could not be allowed to fall prey to communism. However, shortly after the revolution of the sergeants had taken place, Desi Bouterse made contact with revolutionaries such as Grenada's Maurice Bishshop and Cuba's Fidel Castro; it was rumoured that Cuban soldiers were aiding the Surinamese military. To fully comprehend the United States motivation for showing interest in the Surinamese case, a closer look at the U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America during the 1980s is needed. The U.S. policy towards other revolutionary or communist countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada and El Salvador should give some insight into America's perception of the developments in Surinam.

Next to the United States and Surinam there is a third party that needs to be taken into consideration: The Netherlands. The Netherlands maintained strong political ties with Surinam after its independence. The political change in Surinam led to a debate within the Dutch government concerning the assigned development aid. Especially the December murders strained the relationship between the two countries. It is not unlikely that The Netherlands and the United States have interacted on several occasions to discuss the Surinam case and devise a political strategy that would contain or put an end to revolutionary activities. Insinuations about covert CIA operations have been made. It is uncertain whether plans for such operations really existed and whether they actually were carried into execution. The main question I will try to answer in this thesis is whether, and if so, on what grounds, the United States undertook political, military and CIA action against Surinam during the years

1980-1983, the period during which the December murders and radical political and social developments took place in Surinam.

The December murders are paramount in this thesis, because they signify an imported stage in Surinamese history which is sometimes referred to as Surinam's black page in history. It is imported to understand which circumstances led to the murders and what the effects were afterwards. Therefore the period from 1980 up to and including 1983 is discussed.

The first two chapters of this thesis deal primarily with Surinamese issues. The first chapter deals with the changes brought about by the sergeants' revolution of February 1980. The revolution resulted in a period of rapid political and social developments. The outcome was a predominantly left-wing military authority. The aim of this chapter is to outline this development process and to provide a better understanding of the parties involved. The second chapter discusses the actual events on the days surrounding the December murders. It deals with questions such as: who were the actual perpetrators, who were the victims, why did it take place and what impact did these events have on Surinam's image as perceived by international society.

The final two chapters have the United States as their main subject. The third chapter gives an outline of United States foreign politics during the period 1980-1983, specifically with regard to Latin America. This will help us understand in what light the United States would perceive Surinam's political climate and the December murders. The fourth and final chapter deals with the U.S. actual plans, actions, policies and political interactions relating to Surinam. This chapter describes which political, military and CIA action the United States undertook against Surinam during the early 1980s.

The research material that has been used consists of Dutch as well as Surinamese and English, or American, sources. Literature, books and texts, formed the base of the research. Furthermore, newspaper articles from several Dutch newspapers were used. Most of the

articles were taken from online sources. Official U.S. state documents, *American foreign policy; current documents*, were added to the material. Finally, audio-visual material provided extra information. Surinam was very rarely mentioned in the American sources. The first two chapters are therefore based upon primarily Dutch and Surinamese research information. Altogether, these sources gave a well rounded picture of the mutual relations between the United States, Surinam and The Netherlands during 1980-1983.



## **Chapter 1. Political and Social Developments after the Coup d'état of February 1980**

### *§ 1.1 The Revolution of the Sergeants: How "Old Politics" Became New Politics*

Sixteen paltry armed sergeants of the Surinamese army seized power on 25 February 1980. The group was led by sergeant-major Desiré Delano Bouterse, an army sports instructor. At first, the transfer of power received a great welcome from the Surinamese people as well as the Dutch government. Both were highly unsatisfied with the "old politics" which had confronted the Surinamese with acts of corruption since Surinam's independence from The Netherlands in 1975. The revolution was expected to clear the way for fresh ideas and political change (Boerboom and Oranje 18).

Initially, several positive developments took place. The Surinamese constitution remained in force. Subsequently, President Johan Ferrier, who already enjoyed the confidence of the Surinamese people and the Dutch government, continued in office. His task was to establish a civilian administration which would be placed under the leadership of Prime Minister Henk Chin A Sen and his vice-chancellor André Haakmat (Budding 322). The Dutch government felt they had little to fear from Bouterse, for the Dutch military mission, affiliated with the Dutch embassy, described him as an easy to influence man with a moderate political mindset. Therefore, it could be expected that Bouterse would be susceptible to Dutch wishes. In good faith, the Dutch government promised an amount of 500 billion Dutch guilders for an economic priority project (Buddingh 323).

Within two years, however, a seemingly stable situation converted into disorder and political instability. During this period Desi Bouterse managed to manoeuvre himself in a very powerful position. The political change was set off by the removal of President Ferrier from office. Subsequently, Haakmat was relieved from his office and Chin A Sen was forced

to vacate his seat and hand over power to the military authorities (Haakmat, Herinneringen 91-92). The reason for Chin a Sen's dismissal was a difference of opinion within the government on which political line to follow (Buddingh 328).

Politics were becoming more and more socialist. A socialist revolution seemed at hand and this led to discord within the military forces and the government. Furthermore, the people also disapproved of the left-wing intentions which resulted in open resistance against the military authorities. A culmination of events led to the murder of 15 prominent members of Surinam's society. The main question here is which political and social developments and conflicts eventually resulted in the so-called December murders.

#### § 1.2.1 *A Promising Start*

The coup was the result of a variety of issues of concern. In the first place, there was the question of the military's mission in and for Surinamese society. Several Dutchmen and Surinamese shared the vision of the military becoming some sort of development army that would stimulate the countries social, economic and structural development. One such advocate was Chas Mijnaal, a military officer who received his training in The Netherlands. According to him and his peers the military would have to be reorganized, for now the army's principal mission was to provide border patrol and reinforcement for the police during crises (Dew 40). A second issue was the discrepancy of income among the corps' officers. Those who had received training in The Netherlands were given special salary inducements to return to Surinam, yet all new recruits were paid much less (Dew 40). Thirdly, a barracks army is a show army, and therefore requires an emphasis on discipline and appearance. By numerous accounts a kind of extremely harsh discipline was being exercised. Recruits could be locked

up or fined one-third or more of their monthly salaries for issues such as violation of the dress code (Dew 40-41). Bouterse said upon the subject:

“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” (Dew 41).

The fourth and final issue is that of a labour union. The effort to organize a union according to Dutch example had been under way almost since Surinam's independence, first in the *Bond van Onderofficieren* (Union of Junior Officers), then in the *Bond van Militair Kader* (Union of Military Staff, BOMIKA). However, the unions were not given official recognition, and their demands for such recognition were mostly met by disciplinary action (Dew 41). The discontent over the entire situation led to several conspiracies, but Bouterse eventually was the first to initiate a coup.

Shortly after the take-over, attempts were made to form a new political system. The military officials shared a common purpose: to improve the army's organisation and to create a new political order. Nevertheless, they could not reach agreement on how to accomplish the desired changes. Briefly after the victory the authority was officially handed over to the *Nationale Militaire Raad* (NMR)<sup>1</sup>. The council was formed by army representatives, that is, the officers and non-commissioned officers who had supported the coup d'état. The members of the council did not possess enough knowledge concerning the civil system to initiate new policies. The NMR appealed to President Ferrier for his expertise and he agreed to continue in office on a few conditions. Most of all Ferrier emphasised the importance of acting within the boundaries of the 1975 Constitution (Haakmat, De revolutie 19-20).

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<sup>1</sup> *Nationale Militaire Raad* (NMR) translates into National Military Council.

The government was by now taking shape. Ferrier was assisted by Henk Chin A Sen, who took office as prime minister. Chin A Sen called for the assistance of his old friend André Haakmat and appointed him official government counsellor (Boerboom and Oranje 24-25). Bouterse and his chief officer Roy Horb were very impressed by the charismatic Haakmat. He worked swiftly and accurately, and above all shared Bouterse's vision that it was most important to secure power and expand it as quickly as possible (Para 30). Haakmat used his influence to practically dictate the contents of Chin a Sen's declaration of policy. He managed to limit the army's influence and was promised that elections were to take place within one and a half to two years. Chin A Sen said that human needs would be foremost in his government's development planning but that, at the same time, the awareness of the people must be raised. On this point, he sounded no different from former Prime Minister Arron (Boerboom and Oranje 24-29; Dew 49). Chin A Sen introduced the people to "the four renewals": renewal of the political order, renewal of the social order, renewal of the educational order, and renewal of the socioeconomic order (Dew 50). The purpose was to create a Surinam less dominated by ethnic parties, political bosses, and the concentrated power of the urban area, a society in which higher standards of conduct and wider and especially younger participation were encouraged (Dew 50-51). In his speech at the installation of the Chin A Sen cabinet, President Ferrier urged the Surinamese to work for reconciliation and to accept the NMR's word that they would respect the constitution (Dew 49). The reformation of Surinam's political system seemed to commence fairly well.

### § 1.2.2 *Unity Becomes Diversity*

During the formation of the government it became clear that the NMR-members did not all share the same vision. Two of the council advisors, Eddy Bruma and Frank Leeftang, were

given the task to form a list of candidates for the ministerial posts. From that point on, the NMR fell apart into three groups. The council members Michel de Rey and Laurens Neede supported Eddie Bruma as candidate for the position of prime minister. However, they had to sit by and see the position being filled by Chin A Sen. Both Bouterse and Horb were loyal to Chin A Sen and Ferrier. They formed the core of the second group within the NMR. The third party was opposed to both Chin A Sen and Bruma. Stanley Joeman, Chas Mijnaals and Badrissin Sital, who was also the council's chairman, leaned towards the more left-wing ideas of the *Revolutionaire Volkspartij*<sup>2</sup> (RVP), of which Mijnaals was a member (Boerboom and Oranje 31-35).

The leftist fraction of the NMR managed to strengthen their position by carrying through a declaration that announced membership of the NMR to be irreconcilable with being a minister. Both de Rey and Neede were forced to lay down their council membership when they became minister of defence and sub-minister of police, respectively. Furthermore, an advisory body was appointed to give the NMR political advice. Its members were Fred Derby, union leader and member of the *Partij Nationalistische Republiek*<sup>3</sup> (PNR); Ruben Lie Paw Sam, leader of the *Volkspartij*; Iwan Krolis, leader of the *Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie*<sup>4</sup> (PALU) and Henk Herrenberg of the *Socialistische Partij Suriname*<sup>5</sup> (SPS) (Cardenas 21). Again the leftists were predominant amongst these members. The left wing parties were convinced that the revolution had hardly begun.

By now Bouterse and Horb found themselves cornered by the rising left-wing movement. Bouterse was very much worried about his position within the NMR. He pursued his appeal for support to the civilian government and attempted to weaken left-wing influence

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<sup>2</sup> *Revolutionaire Volkspartij* translates into: Revolutionary People's Party. This is a communist party.

<sup>3</sup> *Partij Nationalistische Republiek* translates into: Party Nationalistic Republic. The party is radically nationalistic in its politics.

<sup>4</sup> *Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie* translates into: Progressive Workers and Farmers Union. The party is radically nationalistic and communist in its politics.

<sup>5</sup> *Socialistische Partij Suriname* translates into: Socialist Party Surinam.

within the council. He feared Mijns, Joeman and Sital would try to dispose of him and make way for the revolution (Buddingh 224). The winning party within the NMR seemed to be the left-wing group.

### § 1.2.3 *The Left-Wing Fraction Loses the Lead*

On 13 August 1980 the 1975 Constitution was suspended. This suspension had two causes. Firstly, a budget conflict between President Ferrier and the NMR led to Ferrier's resignation (Haakmat, De revolutie 43-45). This left the country without a president. Secondly, Bouterse discovered a conspiracy within the NMR. Mijns, Sital and Joeman were arrested on suspicion of plotting a coup in co-operation with a foreign power from the region (Cardenas 22). This eventually led to a downfall of the left-wing parties.

The suspension was the result of decree 'A', which became effective in case of a state of emergency. According to this decree the army command had to appoint a new president and cabinet council as soon as possible. According to the constitution the president could only be chosen by Parliament. The military authorities expected that this might lead to troublesome situations, since Parliament had been involved in the budget conflict and had sided with Ferrier upon the subject. By pronouncing decree 'A' effective, they could instantly install a new president (Haakmat, De revolutie 78-79). The army installed Chin a Sen as president and Haakmat became vice-chancellor. This gave Haakmat authority over the ministries of justice, foreign affairs and the department of government (Boerboom and Oranje 25-27). The institutionalisation of the military authorities was an important result of decree 'A'. The second article of the decree stated that after the installation of a new administration the army command would also be part of the government. For the first time the army officially became a co-legislator.

Bouterse held the power and had managed to prevail over his enemies. The three suspects in the countercoup case were brought to trial. They were said to have been planning a take-over with the help of Fidel Castro. In fact they had met with Castro in Managua during a reception which was also attended by delegations from other countries such as Grenada. Even so, the meeting was just to get acquainted with one another and Castro gave his support to the Surinamese people (Cardenas 22). On the other hand, there was some proof that a meeting had taken place at Leonsberg which dealt with the subject of a possible take-over. The attendants nevertheless came to the conclusion that the time for a transfer of power had not yet arrived (Boerboom en Oranje 25-26). The suspects were defended by Eddie Hoost, John Baboeram, Harold Riedewald and Willem Sewpersad. Except for one, all the defendants were found guilty as charged and received sentences of up to three years in prison (Haakmat, De revolutie 98-99).

Bouterse had another reason to do away with leftwing influence within the NMR. During a visit in July 1980 Dutch Minister of Development Jan de Koning had expressed the Dutch governments eagerness to see democracy restored in Surinam. His unwillingness to make any commitments concerning the unspent monies in the development agreement had given rise to daily demonstrations. Chas Mijhals threatened not to let the minister leave the country until he agreed to Surinamese demands. In reaction to this radicalism the Dutch government could decide to entirely cut off the development aid. By getting rid of the radical elements in the NMR, Bouterse most likely would please The Netherlands and secure the aid programme (Dew 53). Bouterse had nothing to fear from the left-wing influence upon the NMR and the government any more. Although the leftist movement advanced strongly, it was cut of by the military authorities reasonably quickly.

#### § 1.2.4 *Left-Wing Politics Regain Influence*

The leftist party did not accept its defeat lying down. They managed to draw Bouterse's attention towards them. They convinced Bouterse that a social revolution was the only way to realise a democratic structure for Surinam. Second to that, Bouterse eventually sought out the leftists help, because they seemed the only party that was willing and able to provide him with the power and status he was striving for.

Bouterse started to distance himself from vice-chancellor André Haakmat and President Chin A Sen. In Bouterse's opinion Haakmat acted far too independently. Sital made use of the developing rupture between the two men during his stay in prison. He spoke with Bouterse on several occasions and managed to convince him that he could increase his power if he resorted to left-wing politics. Sital drove Bouterse away from Haakmat's democratic policy. During a radio interview Haakmat expressed his doubts about Bouterse's abilities to make the return to democracy reality. He believed that Bouterse was unable to pursue a consistent line of policy. This interview ended what little understanding there was still left between Haakmat and Bouterse. Haakmat was relieved of his office (Boerboom and Oranje 27-28). Two months after Haakmat's resignation Sital and Bouterse became reconciled, which made the way clear for more socialist participation in politics. Left-wing politics seemed to return on the political scene.

The Sital-group was released before their official release date. During a conference Bouterse embraced Sital, Joeman and Mijns and announced that the military authorities would pursue a socialist course in politics (Cardenas 25). This pronouncement created opportunities for those small socialist parties that had not managed to play an important part in politics before, such as the RVP and the PALU, which secured two ministerial posts (Boerboom and Oranje 29). Sital was appointed minister of public health and both Mijns and Joeman received import functions within the army command (Cardenas 25).



Harvey Naarendorp, an adherent of Cuban style politics, took over Haakmat's position as minister of foreign affairs. He argued in favour of closer relations with other revolutionary countries in the region, in order to form a Caribbean Union (Boerboom and Oranje 29). Naarendorp advised Bouterse to visit Grenada and Cuba. Bouterse was welcomed by Castro personally. Castro proposed to install a Cuban ambassador in Surinam; this would strengthen the political bond between both countries (Cardenas 35-36). The visits to Grenada and Cuba were very successful and a basis was formed for future co-operation between the countries. Left-wing politicians finally saw the socialist revolution take form.

### § 1.3 *Protest Arises against Bouterse's Politics*

Many people within the Surinamese society did not agree with Bouterse's socialist ideology. Chin A Sen disagreed with Bouterse upon the political course he had set out. The proclamation of the 'Manifesto of the Revolution', a document filled with heavily laden words about Surinam's revolutionary path, evoked some resistance on the president's part. During a speech Chin A Sen made on a visit to the Coronie district he warned the people that evil powers were taking over society. Meanwhile Bouterse proclaimed the 'Revolutionary Front' in the presence of delegations from Cuba and Nicaragua. Chin A Sen resigned on 5 February 1982 as a result of a conflict between himself and two PALU ministers. The immediate cause was Chin A Sen's refusal to give a speech, written by PALU minister Iwan Krolis, which announced that the elections which had been planned for October that year would not take place (Buddingh 328).

Protest arose from other sectors within society besides the political elite. Some military officials also disagreed with Bouterse. Horb surrounded himself with right-wing advisors and with their help organised projects for the people. This made him very popular

amongst the Surinamese. The close relationship between Horb and Bouterse seemed to come to an end (Boerboom and Oranje 31-32). Furthermore, Surindre Rambocus staged a counter-coup on 11 March 1982. At first, he and his men seemed successful. The second day, however, Bouterse and his men captured one of Rambocus' men, William Hawker. He was forced to make an appeal on television to cease the attack. Thereupon, the already badly injured Hawker was executed during that same broadcast. The execution was witnessed on television by almost the entire Surinamese population. This course of action gave rise to public protest. Rambocus was therefore properly sent to prison after his arrest. The failed coup attempt initiated public protest against Bouterse and his politics. During the press conference that followed Rambocus's arrest, journalist Lesly Rahman asked several critical questions which did not please Bouterse. He refused to answer any further questions from Rahman. Directly after the conference Naarendorp warned the journalist that he was risking his life by pursuing such a course of action (Zonen van Suriname).

During the second half of October 1982 Rambocus was tried for his attempt to overthrow the military command. The Rambocus family hired the best lawyers to represent the defendant, such as Eddie Hoost and John Baboeram. Despite the ban on demonstrations, the defending counsel was showered with confetti when they entered the courtroom. Baboeram openly expressed his doubts concerning the legitimacy and reliability of the trial. Hoost questioned the grounds of the charges, since the prosecuting party had made itself guilty of those same charges less than two years ago. The Rambocus trial became a symbol for the resistance against the military powers. Nevertheless, Rambocus did not fare well; he received up to twelve years imprisonment (Boerboom and Oranje 38-39).

The military command and their radical advisors had estranged themselves from the people with their revolutionary political course. The revolutionaries saw an rising threat in several social groupings that were expressing their dislike of the current state of affairs.

Especially the unions C47, headed by Fred Derby, and the *Moederbond*, lead by Cyrill Daal. Several arrests were made during peaceful demonstrations by the union members for better rice prices. Subsequently the head office of the *Moederbond* was invaded by members of the militia, who had the task to control disruptive elements in society. As a result, health care and education employees went on strike (Budding 329).

Cyrill Daal came in for the military authority's special attention, since he was suspected of organising various demonstrations that were a direct attack on Desi Bouterse. The union leader was held responsible for the air traffic controllers' strike, which occurred during a large manifestation in honour of Bouterse revolutionary hero, the prime minister of Grenada Maurice Bishop. The strike reflected badly on Bouterse. Daal also refused to accept an invitation for Bishop's reception. Daal was arrested, which gave rise to a massive protest action by the people. As a result Bouterse had to entertain his important guest by candlelight, since the workers at the power plant had laid down their work (Boerboom and Oranje 46-47). Fred Derby disagreed with the aggressive measures Daal was willing to take. He was opposed to the general strikes. Therefore, Derby endured far less resistance from the revolutionary forces than Daal did (Boerboom and Oranje 42).

Bouterse received the final blow on 30 October 1982. Both he and Cyrill Daal had simultaneously organised a mass meeting. Nevertheless, Daal managed to bring out ten times as many people as Bouterse did (Para 37). Daal's exuberant speech was broadcast live by the local radio station ABC which was owned by businessman André Kamperveen. The words "All soldiers back to the barracks, power to the people!" were heard throughout Surinam (René Zwaap). Once more Bouterse stood by and saw his meeting, which was again attended by Bishop, sabotaged by the union leader. That same day Bouterse addressed his followers and said: "Daal has presented us with his bill today. Should I pay him in cash or by credit transfer? I cannot pay him through the bank, for it is going to be closed. We will pay him back,

in cash!" (Zonen van Suriname). Unfortunately, the strikes were not very successful. This was partly due to the disagreements between Daal and Derby.

During a secret meeting in September Bouterse promised the unions to make preparations for a new constitution and elections before the beginning of July 1983. As a result, the unions collectively presented a plan concerning a phased democratisation. While the negotiations with the authorities took place, Bouterse announced that he would present his own plan for the democratisation process before the end of March 1983. The unions felt betrayed.

By the end of November almost the entire population had turned against the military regime. The 'Association for Democracy' was founded on 24 November by the two unions, the lawyers and the business community. This coalition strove for a return to democracy. At last the *Moederbond* and C47 formed one front, which resulted in far more effective union activities. Students demonstrated on the streets and the media made themselves heard all over the country. The daily paper *Vrije Stem* printed a cartoon that pictured Bouterse with an Uzi in one hand and a pair of scales in the other, which balanced political ambitions on the one side and military ambitions on the other side (Boerboom and Oranje 52).

During the night of 8 December Bouterse set out to eliminate the counterrevolutionary elements of society. His troops burned down two radio stations, the *Moederbond* and a printing office. The fire department was not allowed to extinguish the fires. The media were placed under censorship or forbidden entirely (Para 41). The internal unrest had driven Bouterse to a point of despair. He may have felt that eliminating his enemies was the only way for him to regain control.

#### § 1.4 *Conclusion*

Shortly after the sergeants had taken over power, there arose dissension within the group. The military authorities split up into three groups of which the left-wing fraction eventually became the ruling party. Initially, Bouterse offered resistance to the growing influence of the leftist party. Bouterse eventually managed to provide the National Military Council with governmental powers. Bouterse, however, longed for stronger personal influence. He became convinced that through socialist politics and under his guiding Surinam would finally become the new and improved democracy he intended it to be. These left-wing ideologies were, nevertheless, not supported throughout the whole of Surinam; military officials, politicians and the people themselves turned on Bouterse and his ideas. Bouterse felt cornered by the besieging resistance. Grenada's Maurice Bishop had given Bouterse the advice to eliminate the powers that were against him or else they would eliminate him (Zwaap n. pag.). Bouterse took this advice to heart and eliminated those who were against him. In conclusion, radical politics and personal interest resulted in the December murders of 8 December 1982.

## **Chapter 2. The 8-December Murders: The Actual Events and the Direct Outcome**

### *§ 1.1 The December Murders*

During the night of 8 December 1982 fourteen prominent Surinamese and one Dutchman were murdered. The night before, sixteen opponents of the military authorities were brought to Fort Zeelandia. Only one of these survived the atrocious events which took place over the following two days. The opposition that had increased during the year had now for the greater part been eliminated. Several questions remain: who were involved; why were precisely these sixteen men arrested and what took place during the few days up to the murders. In this chapter an attempt will be made to answer these questions.

The murders had a great impact on the country itself as well as the whole of international society. World-wide organisations were shocked and conducted investigations to discover the truth about the deaths. Surinamese protest groups organised themselves abroad. Countries withdrew their financial aid and Surinam's economy became a wreck. The second part of this chapter focuses on the direct reactions to the murders and the resulting consequences.

#### *§ 1.2.1 The Scenario and Its Contrivers*

The December murders were not the result of a spontaneous outburst against the opposition by the military regime; the events that took place had been carefully planned. This, in itself, means that the military regime knowingly broke both national and international law. The question is why they were willing to take such risks. Several factors contribute to the answer to

this question. First of all, the actual contrivers and their motivation. Secondly, the plan itself and the eventual justification for their deeds.

On 8 December at circa 1.00 A.M. small groups of soldiers left their military base Fort Zeelandia and drove to Paramaribo. Each went to the home of an opponent of the military authorities. Everything went as planned. That is to say, the events which were to take place during that night and the following days had been written down in a scenario (De Decembermoorden 37-39). On 5 December several military officials gathered at the Memre Boekoe barracks. Notable was Major Roy Horb's absence, especially since he was the second in command (Boerboom and Oranje 54). Horb had recently been left out of some major developments. Horb's visit to the United States and his suspected dealings with the CIA, his meddling with the labour dispute, and contacts with Chin a Sen strained the mutual trust between the two men. Those present discussed which measures could be taken to save the revolution. Nevertheless, no definite plans were spoken of (Boerboom and Oranje 55).

On 7 December Desi Bouterse summoned the sergeants responsible for the 1980 coup, the "Group of Sixteen," to one of his residences. During this second meeting, which Horb did attend, Bouterse revealed a plan which he and five others had been secretly working on for the past several days (De Decembermoorden 33). Roy Horb, once Bouterse's right-hand man, had not been informed of these plans. He had been in the United States during the drafting of the scenario. The failing relationship between Bouterse and Horb had caused conflicts within the Group of Sixteen. The meeting was to re-align all sixteen men (Boerboom and Oranje 57).

The exact content of the scenario was gradually revealed. First of all, it contained all the names of those who were to be arrested. Several of those men were located abroad, but they would be arrested in the near future. Next to that, several logistical matters were written down. The prisoners were to be taken to Fort Zeelandia, where they would await their execution. Important strategic buildings in the hands of the opposition should be burned

down. Furthermore, road blocks had to be put up, strategic areas in the city as well as the frontier posts would be heavily guarded, communication by telephone should be disabled to prohibit those arrested to warn others (Boerboom and Oranje 53-57). The group also discussed the justification of the planned actions. Bouterse spoke of secret information concerning another counter-coup at hand (De Decembermoorden 34). In a few weeks, the right-wing elite would launch a counter-coup with foreign support. An intervention was needed to head off such counter-active measures (Boerboom and Oranje 57)

A third meeting took place shortly after the arrests were made. Present were: Lieutenant Paul Bhagwhandas; Badrissein Sital, minister of health care; Errol Alibux and Harvey Naarendorp, minister of foreign affairs; a group later referred to by Horb as the Blood Council (Zwaap n. pag.). During the meeting it came to Horb's knowledge for the first time that the plans included the liquidation of all prisoners (De Decembermoorden 33). In Horb's opinion the other attendants obviously were far better informed than he was. Alibux reasoned that the liquidations would create a shock which would revive the revolution. The lack of a shock effect was the reason why the sergeants' revolution initially had not been truly successful (De Decembermoorden 43). The council decided that they had to come up with an explanation for the upcoming events, one that would not only satisfy the people, but also the international community. Naarendorp had already pointed out that economic aid and bilateral relations would be put at risk. An attack on the military compounds and the fort should be staged in order to mislead the public (De Decembermoorden 44). By now all details of the plan and its results and consequences seemed to have been discussed. The first steps had already been taken during that night without encountering much resistance. The scenario appeared to work very well. If things were to carry on like this, those who contrived it all would be able to secure their position and finally realise the revolution they had wished for so long, without suffering from any serious, long-term, consequences.



### § 1.2.2 *The Victims*

The military command thoroughly discussed which men were to be put on the death roll.

When looking back on the period before the murders took place, it might be possible to understand why they specifically chose those people.

The names and professions of the victims were as follows :

1. John Baboeram, solicitor;
2. Bram Behr, journalist;
3. Cyrill Daal, trade-unionist and Chairman of the *Moederbond*;
4. Kenneth Gonsalves, dean of the Surinamese Bar Association;
5. Eddy Hoost, solicitor and former minister of justice;
6. Andre Kamperveen, businessman, owner of the ABC radio station and former minister of culture and sports;
7. Gerald Leckie, professor at the University of Surinam;
8. Suchrin Oemrawsingh, professor at the University of Surinam;
9. Leslie Rahman, journalist;
10. Soerindre Rambocus, army officer serving a sentence of imprisonment for his involvement in the coup attempt of March 1982;
11. Harold Riedewald, solicitor;
12. Jiwansingh Sheombar, army officer serving a sentence of imprisonment for his involvement in the coup attempt of March 1982;
13. Jozef Slagveer, journalist;
14. Somradj Sohansing, businessman;
15. Frank Wijngaarde, journalist of Dutch nationality.

From October 1982 onwards *Moederbond* leader Cyrill Daal had continuously organised strikes and demonstrations. Many of the strikes called by the *Moederbond* were politically motivated and aimed at returning soldiers to the camp and restoring democracy (United Nations, annex V 4). In one case specifically it was no accident that the strike had coincided with the visit to Surinam of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop of Grenada, who was a friend of Bouterse (United Nations, annex V 4). This incident led to a personal feud between the two men. Cyrill Daal urged his followers to continue to strike until Bouterse was ready to hold elections and to restore democracy (United Nations, annex V 5). Horb took it upon himself to take on the role of intermediary and due to his efforts, the strikes were called off on 2 November. Horb's actions did not please Bouterse and their strong relationship gradually weakened (United Nations, annex V 5). Union C-47, headed by Fred Derby, also organised strikes and demonstrations. However, they did not support Cyrill Daal's radical actions (United Nations, annex V 5). On 31 October 1982, C-47 together with the *Progressieve Werknemers Organisatie* (Progressive Workers Association, PWO) and the *Centrale Landsdienaren Organisatie* (Civil Servants Association, CLO) issued the First Plan of Reconstruction for the return to democracy. They were later joined by the *Moederbond* who were delayed due to Daal's brief arrest. He was released following an intervention by Fred Derby (United Nations, annex V 5).

Meanwhile the *Associatie voor herstel van de Democratie* (Association for Democracy) had been founded. This association was formed by fourteen subgroups.<sup>6</sup> The committees of those groups would regularly come together in order to constitute a plan which would revive democratization processes (Lionarons 4-5). On 23 November 1982, the

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<sup>6</sup> The following members constitute the Association for Democracy: the Committee of Christian Religions, the Hindu Religious Community Sanatan Dharm, the Hindu Religious Community Aryans, the Association of Managers and Chief Editors of the Press, Madjlies Muslim in Surinam, the Surinam Islamic Association, the Surinam Muslim Association, the Surinam Business Association, the Association of Surinam Manufacturers, the Surinam Bar Association, the Association of Medical Practitioners in Surinam, the Central Organization of Farmers' Unions and the National Surinam Women's Council.

Association for Democracy sent a letter to Bouterse in which they challenged and criticized his idea of democracy. According to them, his view on democracy was totalitarian in concept. The letter included the following:

By persisting in this point of view, the consequences will be fully predictable. Considering the fact that your views are rejected for reasons of principle by a large majority of the population, you will be relying on an ever decreasing minority and in the ultimate resort you will be inclined to adopt a power enforcement policy of a repressive nature, unheard of according to Suriname standards. (United Nations, Annex V 5)

Problems also arose at the university. There was a conflict between those who wanted the university to return to the way it was before the sergeants' revolution, led by the Union of Lecturers and those who wanted the university reconstructed and led by the interim board of the university. In October 1982 the Union of Lecturers tried to call a general strike of students, but it failed due to lack of support. Still, the students from the faculty of medicine joined the lecturers in their demand that the interim board should be dissolved and occupied the medical institute for a number of weeks. On 10 November 1982 the students were removed from the building peacefully as was subsequently shown on television. In search of more support the Union of Lecturers mobilized secondary school students. On 2 December they took to the streets accompanied by a small number of university students. This time the security forces used force to handle the situation. They had beaten up the students and thereby incited an emotional reaction from the entire community which led to the increase of social unrest (United Nations, Annex V 5-6). In reaction to the events the Association for Democracy wrote another letter to Bouterse which stated:

. . . As far as we are aware, this is the first time in our history that students have been beaten up during an otherwise peaceful

demonstration . . . . It was unfortunately again shown on this occasion that a stubborn attempt to impose the will of a small minority on a large majority ultimately ends in the use of senseless violence . . .

(United Nations, Annex V 6)

The trade unions also expressed solidarity with the students. According to lecturers on the steering committee of the university, the events were co-ordinated with those behind the attempted coup of March 1982. The opposition grew even stronger when the Union of Lecturers joined hands with the *Moederbond* (United Nations, Annex V 6). Now there were two centres that wielded power: on the one hand, there were the students, lecturers, religious communities, businessmen, professionals, women and farmers and, on the other, there was the military. The domestic pressure on the military thus increased considerably (United Nations, Annex V 6).

### § 1.2.3 *The Execution of the Scenario*

The actual execution of the scenario took longer than initially planned. Miscommunication within the group of sixteen and the Blood Council, lack of clear orders from the military leaders, and unwilling prisoners led to deviations from the plan. This paragraph deals with the details of the events that took place from the late night of 7 December up to and including 10 December.

From about 02.00 a.m. that 8<sup>th</sup> of December the soldiers arrived at the homes of the intended prisoners. Several of the target houses proved to be empty since the inhabitants were abroad or at another location at the time (NJCM<sup>7</sup> 4). At least three soldiers appeared at each house and disabled the phone lines and thereupon made the arrest. If they were not willing to

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<sup>7</sup> NJCM refers to *Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten*. This abbreviation will be used throughout the text to improve readability.

cooperate during the arrest, the men were taken by force. Shots and grenades were fired at the Kamperveen and Baboeram residences (NJCM 4). Kamperveen let loose his dogs, which were instantly killed (De Decembermoorden 38). In none of the cases did they present a warrant of arrest. The prisoners were taken away by car, some only partially dressed, while their homes and families were guarded by two or more soldiers (OAS<sup>8</sup> n.p, NJCM 4). The sleeping family members were often woken with rude military display and gathered in a room, where they were prohibited from making contact with the outside world (“18 jaar” n. pag.). The guards left their posts from about 6.00 am (NJCM 4).

Meanwhile, several buildings in Paramaribo were burned down or fired at with grenades: radio station ABC, press agency Lionarons, the home of newspaper *De Vrije Stem*, radio station *Radika*, and the building of labour union *Moederbond*. Through radio communications between fire brigades it appeared that they were not allowed to extinguish the fires (NJCM 4). Radio communications between Captain Esajas and a certain secretary revealed that the order came directly from Commander Bouterse (Kamperveen 6). Somewhat later, contradictory messages reached the fire brigades. According to a lieutenant the high command had not given orders to prevent extinction of the fires. From that moment on, the fire brigades were no longer prohibited from performing their task (NJCM 4). That evening, television and radio stations broadcasted an official statement by Bouterse in which he said that "the revolutionary leadership had succeeded in frustrating" an attempted coup which was “designed to restore the situation whereby a small economic elite would come to power and trample underfoot the interests of the workers, peasants and masses of our people," and that a number of suspects had been arrested and held for questioning. They had “simultaneously dealt with some major focal points that were spreading alarm and were being used as centres

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<sup>8</sup> OAS refers to Organisation of American States. This abbreviation will be used throughout the text to improve readability.

for the counter-revolution” and “circumstances had been such that, in the process, a number of these centres had also been physically destroyed" (United Nations, annex V 7).

All prisoners were taken to Fort Zeelandia. Meanwhile, Sheombar and Rambocus, imprisoned for partaking in the coup of March 1982, were taken from their prison cell (NJCM 4). According to Fred Derby, the sole survivor of the murders, they were brought to a space within the fort probably used to give prisoners a breath of fresh air. They were ordered to remove all clothing except for their underwear. The last prisoners were brought in during the late afternoon. Derby recalled never to have seen Lesley Rahman, Bram Behr, Robby Sohansing and Gerard Leckie at the fort at any time during his stay there. They were confined at the military police headquarters. The prisoners were not allowed to speak. Rambocus broke the silence immediately after his confinement within the open-air space. The guards were posted above the space and able to hear his protest. Consequently, Rambocus was mistreated badly (“18 jaar” n. pag.).

During that day, Bouterse, Errol Alibux and Badrissein Sital deliberated over a statement the prisoners would be expected to sign. On the evening of that day, two of the prisoners, André Kamperveen and Jozef Slagveer, were to read out the statement during a live broadcast on television and radio. If necessary both men should be “persuaded” to co-operate, but in such a manner that no physical signs of violence would be visible. Slagveer and Kamperveen had to appear before Horb, who informed them that they were suspected of planning a countercoup. Both men agreed to make a public statement in exchange for their freedom (De Decembermoorden 39-40). Both statements were taped at Fort Zeelandia by a civilian camera crew. The interviewer was Roy Horb. He was appointed this task by Bouterse for two reasons: firstly, Horb’s credibility would be even more compromised than it would have been if his physical appearance had not been connected with the atrocious events that were to occur; secondly, Horb was the people’s favourite and the fact that Slagveer and

Kamperveen made such an incriminating statement in his presence made the story about a counter-coup far more credible (Boerboom and Oranje 74-75). At circa 09.00 P.M, Slagveer's statement aired on national television. This statement was later broadcast on the radio, followed by a very similar statement by Kamperveen (NJCM 4-5). Kamperveen's statement was not broadcasted on television because he showed too many signs of physical abuse. Thus, his statement would not appear sincere to the public. Slagveer was executed immediately after they had taped his statement and Kamperveen most probably was killed on his return to the military base (Boerboom and Oranje 75; De zonen van Suriname).

One by one the remaining prisoners were brought up to face a so-called tribunal formed by Bouterse, Bhagwandas and, on and off, Horb. Shortly before the tribunal began, Bouterse wanted to slightly revise the plan and spare the life of Fred Derby. Although he was a union man, Derby had remained supportive of Bouterse and the revolution. Sital and Alibux were of the opinion that Derby already knew too much (De Decembermoorden 44). Bhagwandas disagreed and furiously stated that they should keep to the plan, stop the nonsense, and kill all of the prisoners (Westerloo, n. pag.). From their place of confinement the prisoners had a relatively good view of Bouterse's office where the tribunal was in session. Shouting and weapons fire came from the room. Except for two prisoners, Fred Derby and Edmund Hoost, none returned to the confinement room ("18 jaar" n. pag.). On their arrival before the tribunal the prisoners were confronted with the statement made by Kamperveen and Slagveer. Bouterse said to each of them: "You are found guilty of anti-revolutionary activities and will be executed on those grounds. What is your response to these accusations?" Reactions varied. Cyrill Daal fell to his knees and, in tears, begged for his freedom. Bouterse thought Daal a weak man without any dignity and self-respect. Such a man had no right to his manliness. Bouterse then picked up a bayonet and cut off Daal's genitals. Thereupon, he was brought to a platform in the courtyard where they executed him.

Reportedly, Rambocus took the accusations with a certain dignity typical of a military officer. He told Bouterse that his regime had come to an end. Bouterse became furious. He shot Rambocus in the back even before they had reached the courtyard platform (De Decembermoorden 46-50). When Derby appeared before the tribunal, Horb was not present, he came in later. Bouterse explained that the noise and blasting sounds coming from the city of Paramaribo were the result of a clean-up to rid the city of counter-revolutionary elements. As they spoke, radio stations, newspaper offices, union buildings and such were being blown up. The tribunal heard Derby's plea for life and a few minutes later he was sent down again ("18 jaar" n. pag.).

Derby and his fellow prisoners saw Bouterse leave the fort twice. Not until his return to the fort for the second time were there any prisoners taken up to the office. Derby was summoned for the second time. Upon Derby's arrival, Bouterse ordered the return of Horb. Bouterse told Horb that he had decided to set Derby free. Horb responded with "Fine." Derby was told to retrieve his clothing from the courtyard platform. What he saw there appalled him. He returned to Bouterse's office in an attempt to plead for the lives of the remaining three prisoners ("18 jaar" n. pag.). Derby said to Bouterse and his companions if their goal was to point out to those that were taken prisoner who held the power in Surinam that had become clear today (Westerloo, n. pag.). From this plea Horb learned, to his surprise, that during his absence another prisoner, Edmund Hoost, had been sent down again by Bouterse. During the hearing Hoost suggested that he could leave the country and never speak of what had happened (de Decembermoorden 47). This might have been why Bouterse allowed him a second chance. Although Derby was fully aware of the events going on at the fort, he was released upon making a vow of silence (Westerloo, n. pag.). Derby recalled returning at his home at circa 09.00 pm that evening ("18 jaar" n. pag.).



Meanwhile, fifteen bodies were still lying in the courtyard of Fort Zeelandia. The high command had not yet consulted upon the question what to do with the remains. Two medics had already been given the order to improve the physical appearance of the bodies. Stitches and bandages were used to obscure the inflicted injuries. Discussions upon the subject arose within the lower ranking echelons. The men were tired and sometimes drunk; there was a chaotic atmosphere. They knew that they were not supposed to hand over the bodies to the victims' families. Several suggestions were made. They could make the bodies heavier with stones and throw them into the adjacent Surinam river. Eventually it seemed best to just simply bury the bodies at the cemetery. However, the thought of driving the body bags through the city did not seem appealing to the soldiers. Finally, they received orders to transport the corpses of the victims to the hospital morgue and put them under military guard (Boerboom and Oranje 84).

During the night of 9 December Bouterse appeared on television and announced that several of the prisoners were shot while attempting to escape Fort Zeelandia during a prisoners' transport: ". . . we had already obtained information from some other prisoners that escape plans had been prepared on behalf of the military prisoners, for which they had already won over some other conspirators. At the moment when the transport from the fort to the barracks was to have been carried out, the fatal occurrence took place, whereby some of the suspects lost their lives" (United Nations, Annex V 10). Bouterse also stated that the compound had been under attack from unidentified aeroplanes. His men had panicked and shot the fleeing prisoners (Westerloo, n. pag.). Furthermore, the National Security services regretted that the conspirators had been killed. Several of them had not yet been interrogated about the planned counter coup (De Decembermoorden 51).

On 10 December the victims' family members were given the opportunity to identify the bodies. Many of them secretly managed to take a peek under the shroud. The bodies

showed marks and wounds that were obviously the result of severe physical torture. All fifteen men could have never been shot on the run: the entrance wounds would have been situated in their backs instead of their faces and abdomens (Westerloo, n.p; United Nations, annex V 10-11). The families were told to prepare for a funeral on 12 December. This contradicted with earlier reports in which it was said that the victims' funerals would be taken care of by the state. On the morning of 12 December, families were to bring clothing and a casket to the morgue. The funeral would take place at 02.00 that afternoon. The bodies were put in sealed caskets, without any form of embalment, and no post-mortem examination had been performed. According to the death certificates the victims died on 9 December 1982. The moment of burial was delayed several times. Thousands of people attended. From that day until 17 December the burial sites were guarded by police during daytime and by soldiers at night (NJCM 6).

Altogether it took three days to work out the scenario. The soldiers of the lower ranking echelons as well as most of the personal bodyguards had no knowledge at all of the plans that had been made by the military command. They simply had to follow orders. Nevertheless, these were often deficient. The military officials deviated from the scenario themselves; especially during the imprisonment and questioning of the prisoners. Discussions, doubts, conflicts, lack of communication led to chaos. The executions themselves are an example of the disorderly behaviour of the soldiers. There was no such thing as a firing squad. The victims were randomly shot at with various sorts of firearms. The soldiers aimed so poorly that some of the victims were still alive after the shooting and had to be killed with a bullet through the head. Plenty of alcohol was consumed. Some celebrated victory, others drank for courage. Drunk soldiers and sergeants became reckless. Some of them blabbed in Paramaribo city: "We did a cool job. We've killed them" (Boerboom and Oranje 85). The military, however, had reached their goals. They eliminated their enemies, shocked society,

and made the way clear for the revolution. From then on, the national and international acceptance of the official declaration concerning the events was the only troubling factor they had to deal with.

#### § 1.2.4 *Determining the Level of Involvement*

Among those present at the time inside the fort were Colonel Bouterse, Major Horb, Lieutenants Bhagwandas, Leeflang and Nelom, and Sergeants Mahadew, Brondestein and Rozendaal. Errol Alibux, Iwan Krolis, Harvey Naarendorp and several members of the current Government, such as Badrissein Sital, were also present from time to time (United Nations, annex V 10). It is hard to determine to what level they, and possible other participants, were directly involved in the events surrounding 8 December, because the contents of the several accounts of their participation often vary. Eyewitness reports are to a certain level unreliable. Personal accounts can be biased, tainted by emotions and personal backgrounds, and memories may fade or change over time.

Major Roy Horb played a significant part in the December murders. Yet, the circumstances surrounding his participation are somewhat dubious. According to the military version of the events, as reported in the United Nations report on Surinam by Amos Wako, Horb was in charge of various parts of the operation. He was put in complete charge of the entire operation of arresting the counter-revolutionaries. The major and his men were the only ones who in fact knew the details of what happened that night. According to Lieutenant Gorré, the military commander at Fort Zeelandia, on the morning of 8 December, Horb ordered him to leave Fort Zeelandia with his unit, the ECHO company, to a point some 25 km from Fort Zeelandia where they set up camp. When he left, Horb took over the Fort. Sergeant Major Zeeuw, the second most senior officer at Fort Zeelandia on the night in question,

reported that he had been on guard duty outside the office in Fort Zeelandia in which Horb interrogated about seven or eight detainees. This office led to a small room, then to the corridor and to the terrace where the detainees were being held awaiting interrogation. According to Zeeuw the only officers present were Horb and himself. At some point during the interrogations shots were fired from a Bren-gun post in the Fort. According to Zeeuw and Captain Graanoogst, who arrived after the shots were fired, the people manning the Bren-gun post had not received any authorization to fire either from Horb or Zeeuw (United Nations annex V 8-9).

Several sources declared that Horb was more or less forced to participate by the originators of the 8-December scenario. His personal guards, Hendrik Karijiwidjojo and Glenn Oord, reported that Horb was rather reluctant to participate and that he had advised them or even given them direct orders not to take part in the upcoming events. Horb told them several days before that something awful was about to occur. He was unwilling to participate, but his own life would be at stake if he did not. On the night of 8 December the bodyguards received orders from Horb to stay inside their quarters. The following afternoon they were ordered to again stay in during the coming evening and night. Glenn Oord: "Halfway during the evening major Horb returned. He told us to gather all weapons. He, by all means, did not want us to participate in the nightly executions. Around midnight we were all sitting upstairs the major's quarters. He ordered us to stay in bed and remain in our rooms; no matter what we might be hearing outside that night. The shooting in Fort Zeelandia started at about 01.00 that night . . . the major himself also remained in his room the entire night" (Gevangenen 50-53). Again, eye-witness reports can be tainted. A soldier by the name of Evert S. stated that he was just twenty meters from the execution site and that he was " . . . sure that both Horb's bodyguards as well as Bouterse's had fired shots" ("Bouterse was bij de Decembermoorden" n. pag.).

The sentiments towards Major Horb within the military were rather negative. After the December murders had taken place, he distanced himself from the military and was subsequently well received in the streets of Paramaribo. On 30 January 1983 Horb was arrested, along with several of his aides, on grounds of treason. He was suspected of planning a counter-coup with CIA aid. A signed letter by his hand, written on his stationary, addressed to the United States and CIA had been found. The letter was most likely forged. Nobody was willing to testify against Horb, although some prisoners were severely ill-treated. Eventually Horb died in his cell under dubious circumstances. He supposedly committed suicide by hanging. Several days later his three bodyguards also died under suspicious circumstances: two in a drowning accident and the other in a shooting (Verhey and Westerloo 63-65: Dew 86).

As far as the other officers are concerned, far less has been reported about their activities. Lieutenant Bhagwandas became known as “the executioner of Paramaribo” (Oranje n. pag.). It most likely was him, and not Horb, that was in charge during the arrests and took over command of the fort (Boerboom and Oranje 81-83). During a conversation with victim Bram Behr’s brother Henri, Bhagwandas admitted to be personally involved in Bram Behr’s killing. He said: “Okay, I have killed, but Desi gave the orders . . . [he] even killed two himself: union leader Daal and military officer Rambocus” (Oranje n. pag.). Desi Bouterse has never admitted such accusations. He merely admitted to have failed as a commanding officer; he should have prevented the killings from taking place.

Several politicians were involved as well. Bouterse may have received information through Harvey Naarendorp. In his function as minister of foreign affairs he often consulted with members of The Association for Democracy. Naarendorp was aware of the association and their work. He often spoke with several of the members and had given his guarantee that the military regime would not interfere and that the government approved of their actions

(Lionarons 4-5). Naarendorp, being part of the group that initiated the intervention scenario, had the opportunity to provide Bouterse with information about the association's members and plans. Nevertheless, some sources claim that Naarendorp was not that much involved. He had no prior knowledge of the events that were to take place on 8 December. The same would be true for Badrissein Sital and Errol Alibux. In fact, shortly after the arrests, during the meeting of the so-called Blood Council they received their first information (Boerboom and Oranje 75-77). This means that they were not the contrivers of the scenario; that it was strictly military design. Errol Alibux and Iwan Krolis showed support for the actions the military had taken to protect the revolution, because reviving the revolution was entirely in line with PALU policies. Alibux organised a meeting with his fellow PALU members. They decided to fully support the military and their future actions (Boerboom and Oranje 77). Wilfred Lionarons, chief-editor for the *Vrije Stem*, has spoken with members of the PALU and with Harvey Naarendorp's brother upon Alibux' and Naarendorp's involvement. These conversations were inconclusive, but Lionarons has remained convinced that civilians were involved. "I still don't believe that the military were able to simply contrive such a plan by themselves...they must have had support from civilians" (5).

Little is known for certain about the events that took place up to and including 8 December 1982. Self-serving accounts and accusations cannot be disregarded in the many unconfirmed stories that surround the most fateful day in Surinam's contemporary history. The statements given by military officials are not so much eyewitness reports as much as a repetition of a thoroughly discussed and engineered statement. The more plausible accounts are those that interpret the murders as calculated actions in the interest of institutional and personal self-preservation. As I have argued the actual influence and actions of the persons involved in the December murders as mentioned in this chapter at this point remain inconclusive.

### § 1.3.1 *Surinam: The People Protest*

The terrible news quickly made its way through the whole of Surinam. People were shocked. A number of them went out on the streets and protested (Boerboom and Oranje 96). For several days 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!" (Dew 84). A group of women asked for Dutch intervention at the embassy, "A return to colonialism is the only option" they claimed. In the third week of January a meeting was held in a church where people could speak their minds freely (Boerboom and Oranje 104-105). Most Surinamese, however, waited in disbelief for what was to come.

The Surinamese resistance from abroad was not very successful. The Surinamese resistance in The Netherlands could not form unity amongst its members. Political exiles, led by Chin A Sen, organized a *Bevrijdingsraad* (Liberation Council) in The Netherlands. Within three months the council, founded as an umbrella organisation for all resistance, started to fall apart due to failing results and lack of action (Verhey 84-90). The Dutch government was supportive of the Surinam resistance as long as they did not take to violence. However, as time passed and the absence of results continued, more and more groups focused on military action. Two serious attempts were undertaken to invade Surinam. In the end, both were not realised due to internal conflict and deceit (Verhey 91-117). With tacit agreement of the French government several Surinamese had begun to organise an armed assault against the military regime from within the borders of French-Guyana. The French government, however, had to expel the Surinam rebels the moment their secret operation became known (Buddingh 333). The weekly paper *Weekkrant Suriname* became an important forum for resistance. Its issues were smuggled into Surinam at some risk. A feeble though sometimes violent counterparty, the *Liga van Patriotten* (League of Patriots) was established by a small group of

Bouterse supporters in The Netherlands, whose obvious goal was to present the military's side of the story (Dew 92-93).

### § 1.3.2 *Surinam: Political Reorganisation*

The murders were the means to achieve revolutionary reform. This is exactly what Bouterse set out to do. From mid-January onwards, he formed his politics after the ideologies of Chas Mijns and Badrissen Sital (Dew 91). The people were to become part of a new democratic order which would enable them to take part in the State's decision making, and would allow the institution of worker participation in the management of companies (OAS n.p; Dew 91). The people's democracy was to be modelled after the Cuban and Grenadian multi-levelled systems with:

1. directly elected local councils;
2. indirectly elected district or provincial councils;
3. an indirectly elected national congress;
4. a "politburo" (or executive cabinet) accountable to the congress (Dew 92).

The government's declaration of policy as presented on 1 May 1983, however, did not provide any arrangements to enable and secure people's participation within the appointed advisory bodies (OAS n. pag.).

Since the *Revolutionair Front* (Revolutionary Front) set up by Bouterse two years before was no longer in existence, it was not clear what party 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 framed evoked little immediate support (Dew 92). It took till 28 February to form a new government. Erroll Alibux became prime minister and minister of foreign affairs (OAS n. pag.). The PALU members took over finance, public works,



agriculture, and social affairs. The RVP was given three ministries, and independent radicals three more. The variety of parties that formed the government suggested that Bouterse was not eager to take on a specific political standpoint yet (Dew 92).

Notable for their absence in the new government were Harvey Naarendorp and Henk Herrenberg. Herrenberg, Surinam's ambassador in The Hague, had returned after the murders to serve as *kabinetsformateur*,<sup>9</sup> which usually leads to the position of prime minister. In this case, he resumed his tasks in The Hague (Dew 92). Herrenberg's participation surprised the Surinamese people. In the past he had dissented from Bouterse's politics but now he acted against his own beliefs and participated with Bouterse (Boerboom and Oranje 103).

Naarendorp, independent but pro-RVP, became a personal adviser to Bouterse. With Naarendorp in this position, the RVP was still in the picture despite reports of the PALU's ascendancy. As the months passed, rumours circulated of conflict between Naarendorp and Alibux over a variety of issues. Bouterse may have enjoyed the disarray among his allies for it enabled him to hold them in his grasp (Dew 92).

#### § 1.4.1 *International Reactions: The Netherlands*

The December murders shocked the international community. A number of countries withdrew their development aid. Several of Surinam's neighbouring countries threatened to close their borders if Surinam was not willing to sever its ties with Cuba. The events of 8 December were thought to result from the Cuban influence upon Surinam's military leaders. There were even rumours about Cubans taking part in the murders themselves. Prime Minister Neijhorst immediately offered his resignation, as did acting President Ramdat Misier, the Surinamese ambassador to the United Nations, and other diplomatic personnel overseas (Dew 84).

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<sup>9</sup> Function comparable to premier-designate

The Netherlands had encountered several other human rights and political issues when dealing with Surinam since its independence in 1975, but, the Dutch government had remained supportive of the authorities that wielded power ever since. This time, however, they felt pressured by the international community to take action, possibly even military action. Shortly after the information regarding the events was disclosed by Surinam's authorities, the Dutch ambassador in Paramaribo J.B. Hoekman composed a list of sanctions for the Dutch government to take into consideration during the weekly council of ministers on the afternoon of 10 December. The ties between Surinam and The Netherlands were still strong due to their shared history. Surinam was the only country which regarded the Dutch embassy as the most important diplomatic representative of any nation. The Dutch government had frequently performed a guiding role during international questions involving Surinam. Therefore, the government felt they had to intervene and take political action against Surinam (Boerboom and Oranje 97-98). Although military intervention would be altogether acceptable in this case, violence is not set within the Dutch political mind frame and the military option was disregarded very early during deliberations (Boerboom and Oranje 99). The Dutch had already suspended their development aid over the removal of Chin A Sen from the presidency, but thus far, this had not been announced as formal policy (Dew 85). Now, Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers announced that further deliberation upon the subject of development aid regarding Surinam would be suspended. All deliveries of military equipment would be discontinued, as well as Dutch assistance in military training of Surinamese soldiers. The government also reconsidered whether the supplementary payments, a sum of money that the Dutch government added to the salaries of the Surinamese soldiers, should continue. Pending the final settlement, all payments would be suspended. Furthermore, The Netherlands would cease to promote Surinamese diplomatic issues internationally (Boerboom and Oranje 100). A spokesperson for the Dutch Minister of Development Eegje van Schoo made it clear

that the conditions for the unfreezing of economic aid were: first of all a return to democracy, including the restoration of an independent judiciary; secondly, a free press; thirdly, freedom of speech, and moreover, the authorities had to present an acceptable explanation for the December murders (Dew 95).

Next to political issues the Dutch government also had to deal with more practical issues. One of the victims, Frank Wijngaarde, was Dutch. Ambassador Hoekman made an official request to hand over the body to the next of kin in The Netherlands. Unfortunately the Dutch authorities did not succeed in transferring the body to The Netherlands and further investigation of Wijngaarde's remains was out of the question (Boerboom and Oranje 97). In response to the 8-December events and the Dutch sanctions the embassy received several request for visas from Surinamese wanting to flee the country. The diplomatic personnel set up a secret network away from the embassy to organise the distribution of visas among the political refugees (Boerboom and Oranje 100).

#### § 1.4.2 *International Reactions: Latin-America and the United States*

17 December 1982 the United States suspended any further aid to Surinam until circumstances concerning the December murders were clarified and Surinam had chosen a clear political path (Dew 85). Surinam was in danger of losing over 1.5 million US dollars of financial aid within a three-year period. In the light of U.S.-Latin American politics, the Surinamese case is very interesting. The U.S. closely monitored Latin American states with leftist governments, for they might form a threat to U.S. security. Therefore, it is surprising that, at first glance, the U.S did not take any direct measures to oust Surinam's leftist regime altogether.

The United States called for Brazil's assistance to increase the pressure upon Paramaribo. Brazil was very much concerned about the influence of revolutionary forces such as Cuba, Grenada and Libya at their border. Bouterse's visit with the Libyan leader Gaddafi had raised concern with both the Brazilian and American government. In May 1983 Brazil's prime security officer, General Danilo Venturini, chairman of the Brazilian National Security Council, flew to Paramaribo in order to express to Bouterse the Brazilian government's concerns about the so-called Cuba line followed in Surinam (Buddingh 333-334). Alibux had invited him to Paramaribo in order to explore closer ties, and hopefully foreign assistance (Dew 93).

The agreement that was finally worked out mainly consisted out of trade deals: Surinam would sell fifty tons of rice and eighty tons of alumina to Brazil in exchange for arms shipments sufficient to allow Surinam's army of 1,500 men to double in size. In addition, Brazil would extend \$15 million in credit and provide technical assistance for twenty-five projects in agriculture, telecommunications, hydroelectric power, and other areas. The Brazilian deal 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. Nevertheless, the Brazilian terms were clear: the Cuba-line politics had to be abandoned if Surinam wished to close the deal (Dew 93).

Venturini's words proved very persuasive. A new government declaration that was to be issued soon was immediately stripped of its left-wing rhetoric. Within two weeks, Bouterse acceded to Brazilian demands and RVP-members Badrissein Sital and Stanley Joeman were exiled to Cuba. The PALU and the RVP had been in constant battle for influence within the military centre of authority. PALU's Prime Minister Alibux visited Brazil regularly and managed to strengthen the mutual ties. The RVP considered the Brazilian deal as a dictate and

RVP minister Sital resigned. His temporary exile had to bring some tranquillity to Surinam (Buddingh 333-334; Dew 93).

The Brazilian deal had been accompanied by the revelation during the American television show *Nightline* of a plan by the CIA to overthrow Surinam's government. The plan was to have been launched early in 1983 (Dew 93). This news had also been brought to the attention of Surinam's ambassador in Washington, Henk Heidweiller, by a reporter for the *New York Times*. The newspaper had gathered information concerning CIA plans to do away with the military leadership. These plans were supposedly initiated in December 1982 (Boerboom and Oranje 107). For the next month, Bouterse railed against the United States and the CIA at every opportunity. Meanwhile, Alibux and the new army second in command, Captain Iwan Graanoogst, were sent to Brazil to work out more details of the Brazilian connection (Dew 94).

The improved relationship between Surinam and Brazil was a small step towards improvement. The American government, however, was not yet satisfied. During a United Nations assembly President Reagan expressed his concerns about the state of affairs in Surinam. The Cuban ambassador, Osvaldo Cardenas, was asked to leave Paramaribo in an attempt to reassure the United States government. Information from within the military authority would often appear on Cardenas' desk that same day; Cardenas influence went that far (Buddingh 334).

Besides the Dutch, American, and other aid cut-offs, Surinam's leadership suffered another blow. The long-awaited decision on Surinam's admission to CARICOM, an economic based co-operative venture between the Caribbean states, was postponed indefinitely. Bouterse repeatedly announced that a great power in the area had offered to temporarily cover the lost Dutch financial aid. The mysterious donor was never revealed. Rumours were that

Bouterse was trying to make a deal with one of the drug-dealing powers in Colombia to which he had sent Henk Herrenberg in January 1983 (Dew 85).

#### § 1.4.3 *International Reactions: International Organisations*

During the 39<sup>th</sup> assembly of the United Nations human Rights Commission, the situation in Surinam was discussed. Due to lobbying by professor P.H. Kooymans of the Dutch delegation, the murders received full attention and Surinam was found guilty of violating human rights (Boerboom and Oranje 108). Nevertheless, they did not begin an official investigation until June 1984. The UN investigator Amos Wako presented his report on 12 February 1985 (Buddingh 332). Wako concludes the following:

On the basis of the information in his possession, the Special Rapporteur finds that summary or arbitrary executions took place on the night of 8-9 December in Fort Zeelandia. In view of the fact that there can be no derogation from article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, that article is binding also "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed" (art. 4) and therefore even if such a threat had existed or was presumed to exist, the executions of 8-9 December 1982 cannot be justified and cannot but be considered summary or arbitrary. The executions had a traumatic effect on the population of Surinam in view of the prominence or stature of the victims. (United Nations, Annex V 16)

Various international institutions issued reports on the events of 8 December. The Dutch *Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten* (Lawyers Committee on Human Rights) had already pronounced judgement on the Surinamese case with regard to the severe torture and intentional killing. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Amnesty

International responded to the murders with harsh words. Amnesty's secretary-general advocated direct intervention; such measures could be taken in case of random executions according to international convention. The Organisation of American States (OAS) issued an extensive and critical report on the human rights situation in Surinam in which they stated the following:

. . . the Commission concludes that serious violations of important human rights provided in the Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man have occurred in Suriname. The rights particularly affected are: . . . The Right to Life, . . . The Right to Justice and Due Process, . . . The Right to Free Thought and Expression, . . . Freedom of Association," and " . . . Political Rights . . . . Given the magnitude and gravity of the violations that have been committed, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights exhorts the Government of Suriname to radically correct both its conduct and its legislation in order to re-establish democratic institutions including an independent judiciary as well as respect for fundamental human rights. (OAS n. pag.)

### § 1.5 *Conclusion*

The people that orchestrated the 8-December murders were those who had been influencing Bouterse for several months now. The left-wing group surrounding Badrissen Sital thought it time to clear the path for the true revolution and they managed to convince Bouterse of the importance of radical change. Bouterse in turn convinced his comrades from the Group of Sixteen that changes needed to be made. The manner in which the changes were to be made troubled Major Horb. From that point on the relationship between Bouterse and Horb was permanently damaged. The plans also served Bouterse's personal interest, for he would be able to secure for himself a powerful position at the centre of authority. Bouterse and his co-

conspirators felt sure that they could get away with it all, as long as they came up with an acceptable explanation of their actions.

The victims were people who did not hesitate to speak their minds about the military authority and doing so managed to reach, and mobilise, the people. Each one of the victims filled an important post within either a trade-union, the Association for Democracy or the university, or had been behind the attempted coup of March 1982. When they started to collaborate and aim their comment direct to the military authorities, Bouterse in specific, they posed a greater threat than ever before. This is why they, and several others, ended up on the death roll.

The murders did appear to have the desired effect. Shortly after that disastrous day, Bouterse initiated reform of Surinam's social and political system. The military had reached their goals. The national and international acceptance of the official declaration regarding the events was the only remaining concern. However, the officials explanation they offered, which spoke of a countercoup with foreign support, air strikes by unknown enemies, panic, and fleeing prisoners, did not convince the international community. The fact that the Surinamese authorities had committed crimes against their own people and violated so many basic human rights caused great upheaval. Furthermore, nations that had any interest in Surinam were not pleased to see radical revolutionary forces gaining ground. Military intervention did not seem an option to these nations. Their governments believed that other options should be explored first, before taking such extreme measures themselves. The Netherlands, United States, and several Latin-American countries used political force to put pressure on the Surinamese authorities.

The Surinamese were shocked by the murders. The people fell prey to feelings of fear, disbelief and anger. In Surinam fear was uppermost. Being so near to the perpetrators, people did not dare to take firm action. Abroad, anger was the dominant emotion. However, anger



generally leads to disagreements. Due to a lack of consensus, it never came to an armed intervention or such.

Bouterse and his associates achieved their goal: to clear the path for the revolution. Bouterse became the master director within the “new” society. Yet, this meagre success brought about its fair share of troubles. Surinam became economically isolated. Even kindred spirits could not lift Surinam out of its financial crisis. Surinam had to conform to international wishes in order to keep its head above water. Failure triumphed over success while they expected it to be the other way around.

## **Chapter 3. United States Policy towards Latin America During the Early 1980s**

### *§ 1.1 Reagan and Latin America*

In the twentieth century, United States policy toward Latin America was primarily based on protecting U.S. economic and security interests. After World War II, these interests were threatened by the Soviet Union's growing influence in Latin America. During the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan made it his quest to rid Latin America of all Marxist insurgents and protect U.S. interests against the Soviet threat. Due to Marxist insurgents, Cuban and Soviet influence, and leftist governments, Central America and the Caribbean were in turmoil during the 1980s. In South America the situation was far more stable; many countries were evolving towards, or had already established, democracy by their own initiative. The Reagan administration, therefore, mainly focused on the countries of the Caribbean Basin. Reagan's harsh policy often disagreed with congressional policy, and therefore he had to resort to covert operations involving the CIA. In this chapter the Reagan administration's policies during the first half of the 1980 will be discussed in order to set the Surinam case in the bigger picture of political developments in Latin America and related U.S reactions. The political and social situation in Nicaragua and Grenada, to a certain extent, resembled Surinam's and therefore discussing these specific cases should create an even better understanding of the measures the U.S. has taken to influence Surinam's political and social development.

### *§ 1.2 United States Foreign Policy toward Latin America After World War II*

After the second World War a new world order took shape. A new balance of power with two major players established itself: the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States (U.S.).

United States foreign policy was greatly influenced by this power conflict, on all levels. U.S. policy toward Latin America was often determined by Soviet-U.S. relations. Next to Cold War tension, economic and humanitarian issues influenced U.S. decision making on Latin-American subjects during the late seventies and early eighties. Nevertheless, interest in the two subjects varied extensively among the administrations of that period.

Post war U.S. policy was dominated by the general perception that the Soviet Union could destroy the United States. This belief went hand in hand with the fear of Soviet based communism which was allegedly driven by the dictates of its ideology to pursue relentless expansion (Schoultz. National Security 110-111). The following comment, made during a press briefing by the Department of State in March 1982, illustrates this sentiment: “. . . if you look at the historic evolution of Marxist-Leninism, you have a Russian empire in trouble. The Soviet ideology has always grasped the self-proclaimed right through wars of national liberation to support a legitimate quest for social justice to spread revolution.” (United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1982. 1423). From these beliefs originated several opinions concerning Latin-American countries amongst U.S. politicians. The geographical proximity of Latin America was a security threat to the United States. The Soviet Union would welcome any opportunity to bring disorder to America’s “backyard” (Schoultz, National Security 117). As stated by an administrator of the Agency for International Development:

The geographic proximity of Latin America and the Caribbean has a direct bearing on our national security. Our vital concerns in the region include unimpeded use of the sea lanes adjacent to North America and the Panama Canal and continued access to oil from Venezuela, Mexico, and other exporters in the hemisphere. Latin America and the Caribbean are also important to our efforts to limit the spread of

nuclear and conventional weapons. (United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1981. 1178)

The fact that Latin-American political culture was innately unstable made it an easy prey for Soviet expansion (Schoultz, National Security 122). Additionally, in the view of many U.S. policy makers, there were three reasons to consider Latin-American radicalism as a threat to United States security. Firstly, the radicals demonstrated hostility towards the U.S; secondly, they were affiliated with some form of Marxism, and thirdly they were uncommonly deceitful (Schoultz, National Security 128).

From the 1960s onward, several other concepts concerning Latin-American instability arose. Many policy makers no longer believed that communist adventurism was the sole cause of instability in the region (Schoultz, National Security 19). More moderate minds considered the Soviet Union “a state like all states” in the sense that Soviet foreign policy merely followed certain basic patterns of behaviour that any state would apply to ensure the security of the nation state. The Soviet Union might not be an instigator; nevertheless, the Soviets would not pass up on a change to increase their influence in already unstable Latin-American countries (Schoultz, National Security 136-139). A substantial group of officials came to regard poverty as the fundamental cause of instability. During John F. Kennedy’s presidency, this variation of political beliefs led to the development of two very different coexisting political courses with on the one hand an economic aid programme, the Alliance for Progress, and on the other hand several counterinsurgency programmes involving, for example, the Green Berets and the Office of Public Safety, appointed to seek and destroy communist insurgents (Schoultz, National Security 19). During the late 1970s and early 1980s almost everyone in U.S. politics agreed that occasional recessions were destabilising factors. Nevertheless, they could not reach any agreement on the question whether structural poverty caused instability. During the Reagan years, economic aid was perceived by many members

of Congress as a necessary evil to gain support for the administration's Latin America policy in general (Schoultz, National Security 98-99). When Reagan took office his administration primarily focused on domestic economics and their message to the developing world was "reliance on the marketplace" (Daly Hayes 119).

When Jimmy Carter became president in 1977, he introduced a new element to U.S. policies toward Latin America: human rights. His predecessors had shown little interest in the massive violations of human rights in the region. Carter had a special sensitivity to Latin America as apparent from his many past visits to several Latin-American countries and his knowledge of the Spanish language (Pastor 62). In contrast to his predecessors, Carter took a more open and international approach toward Latin-America. Carter immediately put his principles into practice: he reopened negotiations concerning the Panama canal and initiated talks with Cuba about the normalisation of relations. The administration's early attempts proved successful to some extent. However, in the last two years of his term Carter encountered war, revolution, and instability in the Caribbean Basin, and Soviet-Cuban expansionism in the Latin-American region and, with some pressure from Congress and the business world, had to address a security agenda atypical of the administration (Pastor 90-93; Keen and Haynes 563-564). By 1980 Carter had shifted to an anti-communist policy in Central America which pursued the combination of military assistance with economic aid and support for democratic political change. Carter was able to maintain his human rights orientation in South America, where leftist revolutionary movements were in decline rather than on the rise. President Carter's attempt to make human rights instead of fighting communism the main issue of the United States policy toward Latin America was the only exception to post war anti-communism (Carothers, The United States 4).

Two versions of anti-communist policy alternated in the United States after World War II: a pure Cold War policy and a mixed policy. The pure Cold War policy was marked by

a very low interest in Latin America except when leftism raised its head. When that occurred the United States intervened covertly to remove the leftist government in question. The mixed anti-communist policy entailed a high level of interest in Latin America. The mixed version attempted to treat democracy and anti-communism as complementary goals. However, anti-communism remained the fundamental goal and when the two goals conflicted, anti-communism prevailed over democracy (Carothers, The United States 3-4).

When Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency in 1981, he wanted to make some significant changes in the general politics. The rhetoric of Ronald Reagan's first term marked the formal end of the period of detente. America's goal was no longer a relaxation of tensions but crusade and conversion (Kissinger 767). Reagan became president in 1981 determined to turn back communism in Latin America. He distanced himself from Jimmy Carter's pursuit of human rights policies. He and his fellow conservatives believed that the Carter administration's policies had failed U.S. interests badly for the past years (Keen and Haynes 564; Daly Hayes 98). The Reagan administration pursued the Cold War policy as well as a mixed approach. Initially, President Reagan intended to return to a pure Cold War approach, emphasizing the Soviet influence upon several Central American countries and applying military solutions in for example Nicaragua and El Salvador. However, pressure from congressional Democrats and the growing influence of more moderate Republicans brought Reagan around to a mixed version of anti-communist policy in Latin America. Nevertheless, the Reagan administration maintained a pure Cold War policy toward Nicaragua until the very end (Carothers, The United States 4). The failures during the second half of Carter's presidency had taken their toll of confidence in the public and Congress. Therefore, the change of course that Reagan advocated was supported by a broad public that was eager to make the changes (Daly Hayes 98-99). During Reagan's first term the United States had three core objectives concerning Latin America: to assure that no form of military activity would be

introduced into the region by the Soviet Union or its allies by helping threatened countries to defend themselves, to promote economic development and long-term political and social development so that the countries could become self-sufficient; and to assure continuing access to the assets of the region, such as the Panama Canal and the sea lanes (Lowenthal 275-276, United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1981. 1186-1187). These three core objectives were all based on the same principle: to secure U.S interest from communist threats. In order to prevent the spread of leftism the Reagan administration aided anti-communist guerrillas in their battle against communist governments; this line of policy became known as the Reagan Doctrine.

The policies of the Reagan administration were based on rather black-and-white terms; parties were either for or against the U.S. Reagan's thoughts on foreign policy had been formed by the Cold War. He had served as an anti-communist FBI informant during his leadership of the Screen Actors Guild and had been a spokesman for American free enterprise capitalism. During the period up to his election as president, Reagan constantly emphasised on the U.S' need to strengthen its defences and protect its position as a world power. In his eyes, the Vietnam War had confronted and weakened the United States' international stature. This could have been avoided if the U.S had acted with diplomatic action and more military force in what he saw as a struggle of democracy against communism (Kyvig 4-5). Reagan's political mindset resulted in harsh foreign policies which left no room for negotiation.

### § 1.3 *South America*

During the Carter years relations with several South American countries had distinctly worsened. The incoming Reagan administration was determined to rebuild relations with South America. The administration's anti-communist outlook was the primary reason for this

rapprochement. According to Jeane Kirkpatrick, member of Reagan's National Security Council, it was a political necessity to support anti-communist, authoritarian governments in developing countries as an alternative to leftist totalitarian rule (Carothers, Democracy 119-120). This line of thinking agreed with Reagan's black-and-white vision of world politics: these countries were obviously against the Soviet Union, so they must have been on the U.S.' side. For the Reagan team, the moderate minded military leaders of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and other South American countries deserved United States backing. Furthermore the administration hoped that an improved relationship would encourage South American countries to lend the U.S. their political and military support in fighting communism in Central America and protecting the South Atlantic sea lanes (Carothers, Democracy 119-120). Military cooperation had been on the U.S. agenda since the beginning of the Cold War. However, these military exchanges mainly served a political purpose: they established lines of communication and enabled the U.S. to pursue friendly relations with South American governments. In fact, there was little reality in the claim that the U.S and South American forces would cooperate during a battle against a communist power. Only on rare occasions in history had South American troops fought together with the U.S. military. Especially the countries on the west coast of South America had no substantial role in U.S defence. There was no significant land, air or sea route to protect. Brazil, with its strategic position and apparent size, was thought to be a valuable point of access to the Atlantic. Nevertheless, Brazil showed little willingness to participate in any military venture; they gave primacy to economic interests (Schoultz National Security 174-190). Furthermore, there existed no plausible scenario in which a Soviet assault would jeopardise any South Atlantic sea lines. In fact, most of the important maritime routes, especially oil trade routes, passed through the Caribbean. The safety of these routes was of the highest concern to the U.S. (Schoultz National Security 192-201).



The Reagan administration's rapprochement with the military governments of South America got underway in early 1981 and quickly took shape as a multifaceted effort involving the upgrading of diplomatic contacts, the adoption of "quiet diplomacy" on human rights, and an attempt to reinvigorate U.S.-South American military assistance and cooperation (Carothers, Democracy 120-121). The Reagan team preferred to promote both U.S. interests and human rights improvements by maintaining a friendly relationship with governments that had poor human rights records rather than making human rights the sole test of a bilateral relationship. Therefore, they applied "quiet diplomacy" to accomplish improvements in human rights (Daly Hayes 100). Secretary of State George P. Shultz accompanied President Reagan on "a four-country swing to South and Central America" during which they visited Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Honduras. During these visits administration officials took a friendly tone, expressing U.S. desire to improve relations. According to Shultz "the president's ideas from the beginning had been that he wanted to 'drop in on friends'; he wanted to listen, not lecture" (Shultz 134).

By late 1982 the policy of rapprochement was already in decline. Democratic revival had begun and countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Bolivia ousted military regimes, which gave way to elected governments (Keen and Haynes 270). Many governments reassessed their relations with Cuba and overall these relations deteriorated during the 1980s (United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1981. 1223). The Reagan administration had no further reason to enforce democratic transition in South America. The administration began pursuing regular, friendly relations with the newly elected governments. This policy of primarily verbal support did however include a clear stand against military coups or any kind of overt military interference with newly elected South American governments. The Reagan administration repeatedly declared that it would not condone military coups (Carothers, Democracy 134). As George Shultz puts it, during a visit to

Honduras “the president’s presence and his words” expressed U.S support for “democracy, freedom, economic development, and the rule of law” (Shultz 134).

The debt crisis that swept through the Latin-American countries during 1982 called for a different approach. The Reagan administration dealt with the crisis in South America through short-term policies that insisted on deep economic reforms. The government’s main focus was on Brazil. If that country was able to pull through, it would provide a secure base for the entire region (Daly Hayes 125-127). Although it seemed that the administration had distanced itself from anti-communist policies, these economic policies were merely another means to push the South American countries towards democracy, away from leftism, and to prevent another crisis which could provide an opening for communist influence.

#### § 1.4.1 *Central America and the Caribbean*

Reagan had been elected on the promise of militant anti-communism and he held his word by committing substantial amounts of United States funds and military advisers to the anti-guerrilla war in Central America (Keen and Haynes 564; Kissinger 767). The Reagan administration attempted to prevent the spread of leftism in Central America and the Caribbean through a multifaceted policy that combined military assistance, economic assistance, and efforts to promote elected civilian governments. This anti-communist policy was publicly portrayed as a pro-democracy campaign, with democracy to be achieved by gradualist, centrist transitions away from right-wing authoritarian rule by the application of military force against leftist governments. This way, promoting democracy formally became the central stated goal of the Reagan administration's intensive involvement in Central America (Carothers, *Democracy* 5, 13).

The Reagan administration was preoccupied from the start with Central America and the Caribbean. At that time, the region had to cope with severe economic downfall. The U.S. economic policy was orientated domestically and had little attention for Latin America's economy. However, Reagan unveiled his economic policies for the region in his Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) of 1982. The speech in which President Reagan announced the CBI reflected the conflict within the direction of U.S. policy toward Latin America at that time. One half of the speech emphasised the threat of Cuban-style leftism in the region; the other half emphasised the need for economic development to provide a sound basis for democracies to flourish. Eventually, the Cuban threat was given much more emphasis than the need for measures to stimulate economic development in the region. Due to the conflicts surrounding the actual content and purpose of the CBI, the bill did not pass Congress until December 1983 (Daly Hayes 121-122).

The 1982 San José Principles were clearly a political effort to prohibit the progress of communism. The document was especially aimed at Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. The countries of Central America had to "create and maintain truly democratic government institutions based on the people's will as expressed in free and regular elections; . . . respect human rights; . . . prevent the use of their territory for the purpose of supporting, supplying, training terrorist or subversive elements in other states; . . . put an end to traffic of weapons . . . or activity aimed at the violent overthrow of the government of another state; . . . limit armaments and the size of the military and security forces to the levels that are strictly necessary for the maintenance of public order and national defence, . . . withdraw from the Central American area all foreign military and security advisers and troops and prohibit the import of heavy weapons of evident offensive capacity through procedures that will guarantee verification"(Shultz 288). Both announcements centralised the need for democracy. The

statements represented the United States' official policy toward Central America and revealed the government's overt agenda.

The Caribbean Basin was in turmoil when Ronald Reagan became president. In Nicaragua, Sandinista leaders attempted to make the way free for a major social revolution. In El Salvador the U.S.-backed government of José Napoleón Duarte had managed to turn back the guerrillas but the struggle was not yet over and the Salvadoran army and civilian elites continued to repress the population. In Guatemala, guerrilla units were becoming stronger and the Indians of the northwest highlands had joined the rebellion against General Romeo Lucas Garcia's government. In both Honduras and Costa Rica things seemed quiet, but poverty and recession might lead to troubles in the future. On the other side of the Caribbean was Grenada, a small island which was ruled by the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). Grenada was the base of a Cuban-assisted project to build a world-class airport from which an air bridge to mainland Central America could be established. Grenada's anti-American rhetoric and Cuban ties worried the Reagan administration extensively (Schoultz, National Security 48-49). In El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica the U.S. main concern was to ensure that the rightist or more moderate governments did not fall to internal or external leftist aggression. As in Surinam, leftism had already pervaded Nicaraguan and Grenadian politics. The Reagan administration's goal was to oust the leftist parties from Nicaragua and Grenada with the use of direct or indirect military force.

The Reagan administration had expressed their foreign policy concerns for the Caribbean and Central America in economic and political terms, but, in fact, the most important issue was U.S security. Communism would be most harmful in the Caribbean region, so close to the U.S borders and where important trade routes were at risk of becoming Soviet controlled.

#### § 1.4.2 *Nicaragua*

When Ronald Reagan came to the presidency, he condemned the Nicaraguan Sandinista National Liberation Front (SNLF), or Sandinistas, for its ties with Cuba. The SNLF was a revolutionary movement which took power from the dictatorial Somoza family in 1979 and had become the country's leading leftist political party. The Reagan administration regarded Nicaragua as the "most worrisome" of all problems in Central America. It was the Sandinista government that had involved the entire region into the conflict by backing up Marxist insurgents in El Salvador with military supplies and training. In 1982 Nicaragua was expanding its influence toward Costa Rica and Honduras, resorting to acts of terrorism and threatening civilians (United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1982. 1460).

In reaction to the situation in Nicaragua, the Reagan administration froze the remaining \$15 million of a loan of \$ 75 million made by the Carter administration for aid to the private sector (Keen and Haynes 476). Furthermore, the administration authorised the CIA to finance, train and arm rebels. On 1 December 1982 Reagan assigned a \$19 million budget for the training and arming of 500 anti-Sandinista insurgents in cooperation with Argentina. These so-called Contras were mostly remnants of Somoza's National Guard. Honduras and to a lesser extent Costa Rica were the staging areas for Nicaraguan operations led by the Argentine and U.S. advisors (Keen and Haynes 476-478; "Nicaragua" n. pag.). The raids into Nicaragua led to the deaths of hundreds of soldiers and civilians. The raids caused much harm to Nicaragua's economy, agriculture in particular; bridges, land, construction equipment, etcetera were destroyed and manpower and resources had to be diverted to military purpose. The costs of maintaining this "secret war" were high. To secure Honduran participation, U.S. military aid may have reached as high as \$144 million in 1983 (Keen and Haynes 477-478).

In August 1982 Assistant Secretary of States Thomas Enders spoke of political measures concerning Central America that were contradictory to the measures which the administration had already employed.

. . . we have attempted to engage Nicaragua in a dialogue. We have tried to respond to Nicaragua's concerns, . . . we have offered to enter into a formal nonaggression agreement. We have assured them that we are enforcing our Neutrality Act, which makes it a federal crime to launch an attack, or to conspire to attack, another country from the United States . . . we have suggested that each country in Central America agree to put a reasonable, low limit on the numbers of foreign military and security advisers it has, and we have suggested that each country pledge not to import any additional heavy offensive weapons. Both commitments, of course, would have to be subject to international verification. These are some of the ideas we have advanced, not in any prescriptive sense but to start a dialogue to generate a response, to try to create a climate. Finally there should be limits to foreign involvement particularly in matters affecting security. . . .

(United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1982. 1461-1462)

Overtly the Reagan administration promoted pro-democracy policies, but secretly the Reagan team “bent the rules” and pursued anti-communist policies in the line of the Reagan Doctrine. Congress was bypassed and therefore felt it had to take countermeasures in order to constrain the political liberties several officials of the administration had allowed themselves. On 8 December 1982 the Boland Amendment blocked the military aid programme when it was discovered that the American ambassador in Honduras had supervised the training and arming of Nicaraguan exiles (Shultz 288). The amendment prohibited covert actions against the Nicaraguan government and solely allowed Contra aid to be used for the interdiction of arms shipments from Nicaragua to Salvadoran rebels (Carothers, Democracy 85).

In March 1983 pressure against the Sandinista government escalated, when several thousand of Contras and other mercenaries supported by Honduran troops invaded Nicaragua. Simultaneously, U.S. warships were sent to monitor Nicaraguan arms shipments to El Salvador. U.S. interference reached its height when the warships attacked Nicaraguan ports and oil installations and laid mines outside Nicaraguan harbours (Keen and Haynes 478; Carothers, Democracy 86-87; Woodward 368). On 20 September 1983 President Reagan signed a finding stating that the covert actions in Nicaragua were aimed at moving the Sandinista government towards negotiations and forcing them to cease supporting Salvadorian rebels (Woodward 398). Again, a statement which agreed with the U.S. pro-democracy campaign. In response to the news that the CIA was involved in laying the mines, the U.S. Congress prohibited all further funding of the Contras, but the Reagan administration secretly continued to support the Contras by covert arms sales to Iran and using the profits to resupply the Contras. Each month a million U.S. dollars from Iran was invested in the Contras. In late 1986 the secret resupply programme was discovered, causing a great scandal (Carothers, Democracy 89-91; Woodward 368). The case went down in history as the Iran-Contra affair or Irangate.

The Nicaraguan case illustrates the post-Vietnam War tension between Congress and the Reagan administration. Whereas Reagan believed that Nicaragua's leftist government had to be unseated, Congress was merely willing to commit itself to supporting counterinsurgents; keeping in mind the disastrous results of U.S military intervention in Vietnam. The administration's efforts to deceive Congress are characteristic of Reagan's foreign policy during the early 1980s. Reagan and his consorts were so rigid in their beliefs about the so-called rollback of communism that they would twist the facts to fit their perception of a certain situation. The administration left no room for Sandinista initiative and demonised any Nicaraguan offers to negotiate movement towards a representative democracy. As Susanne

Jones puts it: “it was not the actions of that [Sandinista] government but its existence that was intolerable to the Reagan administration” (Jonas 99-104).

### § 1.4.3 *Grenada*

In 1974 The United Kingdom granted Grenada independence under the leadership of Eric Matthew Gairy. In March 1979 Maurice Bishop put an end to Gairy's dictatorial rule over Grenada with a coup d'état. Bishop, the charismatic and popular leader of the New Jewel Movement (NJM), put himself at the head of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) and suspended the constitution. He promised to pursue non-aligned foreign politics based on independence and peaceful coexistence, refraining from participation in military alliances, aimed at ending colonialism and imperialism (“Grenada” n. pag; “Niet-gebonden landen” n. pag.). Bishop also promised elections and improved observance of human rights (Shultz 324). Bishop's failure to act on these promises did not sit well with the United States. On 15 June 1982 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Stephen Bosworth addressed the Subcommittee of the House of Foreign Affairs about U.S. relations with Grenada.

It [the Grenadian government] has postponed elections indefinitely and has taken a number of actions which have seriously eroded the human rights of the Grenadian people. Basic freedoms and due process of law have been effectively denied in Grenada. At the same time, Grenada's People's Revolutionary Government, the PRG, has adopted a military foreign policy harshly critical of the United States and has openly aligned itself with Cuba and the Soviet Union. (United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1982. 1441)

The airport that was being built on Grenada was of great concern to the Reagan administration. The U.S. considered it to be a military undertaking, whereas Grenada claimed



that the airport was built in order to promote tourism. According to the U.S. there were as many as a hundred Cuban military advisors in Grenada and several hundred Cuban construction workers involved in building the airport. Once finished, the airport could serve as a refuelling stop for flights carrying Cuban troops to Africa or as a staging area for operations against other nations of the Caribbean Basin (Shultz 324; Schoultz, National Security 240-242).

In 1983 a power struggle developed between Bishop and a more hard-line majority of the PRG, including the deputy prime minister and co-founder of the NJM, Bernard Coard. Bishop's efforts for rapprochement with the U.S. provoked an even greater division within the NJM. This led to Bishop's house arrest on 13 October 1983. On 19 October a large crowd marched to the Bishop residence and freed him. Bishop's supporters and the troops loyal to Coard converged at Fort Rupert where soldiers separated Bishop and his circle from the crowd with a display of military force. Bishop and the others were eventually executed by a firing squad that same day. The murders were condemned by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)<sup>10</sup> (Carothers, Democracy 110-111; Shultz 323-325).

The Reagan administration was concerned for the safety of about a thousand U.S. students enrolled at Grenada's St. George University. Efforts were made to evacuate the medical students through a Pan Am charter flight, but the effort failed, as did the effort to evacuate the students with a chartered cruise ship; both were respectively denied landing and docking rights. Six days later, the island was invaded by forces from the United States at the request of the member states of the OECS. In October 1981, U.S. military forces had already carried out an exercise which simulated the invasion and temporary occupation of a small Caribbean island. These plans could now be put into action and on the night of 24 October 1900 American and 300 OECS soldiers invaded Grenada (Carothers, Democracy 110-111;

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<sup>10</sup> OECS member states: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitt-Nevis, St. Vincent, The Grenadines and Grenada

Shultz 326; “Grenada” n. pag.). The British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had been opposed to any military action and preferred economic or political pressure. Nonetheless, U.S. officials had received information that British naval and aerial support was standing by during the night of 24 October (Shultz 331).

The students’ rescue and the OECS request for aid were put before the public as the justification for U.S. armed intervention; however, several other matters were involved in the decision making. Bernard Coard’s regime was even more Cuba orientated than Bishop’s had been. Reagan officials feared a dangerous turn to the extreme left in Grenada. Furthermore, it should be noted that the island of Grenada could have become a corner of a triangle comprised also of Cuba and Nicaragua; these three countries could have militarily controlled the deep water passages, thereby controlling the route over which about one-half of U.S. imported oil from countries such as Venezuela and Mexico passed. Nevertheless, not until some disapproving sounds came from the international front, did the administration mention any of these issues in its official statements (Schoultz, National Security 241-242; Carothers Democracy 113; United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1981. 1178). Britain especially did not respond well to the American effort. According to Secretary of State George Shultz, Margaret Thatcher said the following about the case:

We in the Western countries, the Western democracies, use our force to defend our way of life. We do not use it to walk into independent sovereign territories . . . If you’re going to pronounce a new law that wherever communism reigns against the will of the people, even though it’s happened internally, there the USA shall enter, then we are going to have really terrible wars in the world. (Shultz 340-341)

In fact, the Reagan administration desired to apply a policy of “rollback” against the Soviet Union by removing communist regimes seated at the periphery of what could be perceived as the Soviet empire. Grenada was the smallest of those states and therefore the first to be

targeted (Carothers Democracy 114). Grenada was a minor league foe; success was almost guaranteed. Military intervention in this case would improve U.S status and overcome the Vietnam Syndrome against using U.S military power overtly (Moore 183).

Directly after the military victory, the U.S. government eliminated all Cuban presence and influence on the island and directed Grenada away from the NJM towards a constitutional, elected and pro-U.S. government. Elections were held in December 1984, which were won by Herbert Blaze and his New National Party (NNP). The CIA spent large amounts of money on political propaganda to influence the outcome of the elections. Blaze formed a democratic government and restored the constitution. Shortly after the elected government was installed, the United States sharply reduced its political, economic, and military involvement (Carothers Democracy 112-113; United States. Department of State. "Background Notes" n. pag.).

Although the U.S. recognised that human rights conditions were lacking, U.S. officials never spoke of a humanitarian intervention. According to U.S intelligence, no independent press was allowed to operate; there was no freedom of assembly; no due process of law and over a hundred political prisoners remained under detention, without ever being formally charged with any crime (United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1982. 1442). The invasion was purely driven by U.S. interests. For the Reagan administration the invasion in Grenada was one of its greatest successes in foreign politics.

### § 1.5 *Conclusion*

The Reagan administration's policy towards Latin America was mainly focussed at Central America and the Caribbean. The attention for the region originated from three points of concern; firstly, the countries of the region were the United States' direct neighbours;

secondly, the region experienced severe political, social and economic disturbances; thirdly, Cuba, as a communist satellite state of the so-called Soviet empire, wanted to expand the Marxist-Leninist ideology throughout Latin America. These three concerns combined formed a threat to U.S. security and economic interests. Although the same can be said for the South American countries, the situation changed for the better without much, if not any, need for direct U.S. interference. Ronald Reagan and his team were set on pushing the leftist threat away from its borders. To do so, they applied covert and overt military and related CIA actions. By characterising all leftist revolutions as Soviet supported or initiated actions, the Reagan administration could rationalise military action and covert operations as a direct assault on communism. The fight against communism did not allow soft politics. Booking success was important for U.S. hegemony and international stature. Due to the fact that U.S. Congress and public and international opinion had their doubts about Reagan's harsh actions, the promotion of democracy was often reverted to as a means of justification. The cases of Nicaragua and Grenada illustrate to what measures the administration was willing to resort in order to remove Marxist or communist regimes. The situation in Grenada much resembles the situation in Surinam: a leftist regime, Cuban ties, political murders, poor human rights conditions, both countries received their independence in the 1970s. The question that arises from this comparison is why then did the U.S. intervene in Grenada and not in Surinam. In any case, the information in this chapter gives grounds to the belief that the U.S. must certainly have been interested in Surinam during the early Reagan period.

## **Chapter 4. United States Actions and Reactions to Political and Social Developments in Surinam**

### *§ 1.1 The United States and Surinam*

One of the Reagan administration's main political objectives was to prevent the spread of communism. In order to reduce communist influence, the United States would help threatened countries to defend themselves. Moreover, the Reagan Doctrine advocated aiding anti-communist guerrillas in their battle against communist governments. A second important objective was to secure continuing access to the assets of the region. Surinam is situated close to Venezuela, an important supplier of oil. Cuba and Surinam were maintaining friendly relations during the early 1980s. These relations were a threat to U.S. security for Cuban troops could launch assaults from Surinam into countries bordering Surinam and from there on move further into Venezuela. With Surinam as a portal to South America, Cuban ideologies and communism could spread through the region as an infectious disease. The Reagan administration was well aware of the communist trend in Surinam. In regard of Reagan's general attitude towards communism, it is most likely that his administration tried to eliminate all communist factors from Surinam.

Several authors have made mention of U.S. interest for Surinam. Four of these authors have given a more extensive description of U.S. reactions to developments in Surinam. Their stories will give insight into U.S. political decision making and actual actions concerning the Surinam case. The CIA played a very important part in the decision making process; they provided the information and devised many a plan. Furthermore, it is interesting to focus on the question why the United States did not intervene, especially in light of the U.S. military intervention operation in Grenada. Both cases show much similarity, but circumstances must

have differed in some way to make the Reagan administration decide so differently upon both situations.

### § 1.2 *Four Stories*

Four stories concerning U.S. interest in the Surinam case have been written down by four different authors: one by Surinam's former minister Andre Haakmat, who makes mention of U.S. involvement in his book *De revolutie uitgegleden: Politieke herinneringen*; another by journalist and author Bob Woodward, who has written down his report in the book *Veil; The secret wars of the CIA 1981-1987*; U.S. former Secretary of State George P. Shultz mentions the Surinamese case in his autobiography *Turmoil and Triumph: My years as Secretary of State*; and William Blum, author and former State Department employee mentions a U.S. conspiracy to overthrow the Bouterse regime in his book *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*. Each one of these stories deals with a different scenario and different actors; however, altogether they provide a general picture of U.S. policies and actions toward Surinam.

Shortly after the December murders had taken place, Bob Hogan, a representative of the National Security Council, visited Andre Haakmat in The Netherlands. During a rendezvous on 12 December 1982, in the little town of Culemborg, Hogan revealed to Haakmat that he was in possession of a list with the names of the intended murder victims. The list contained a total of 23 names. Several of the men named on the list had been abroad at the time the murders took place. Hogan introduced Haakmat to a certain Gregory Hale. Hale claimed he had information on Cubans participating in the December murders, and therefore the U.S. was planning a military intervention in Surinam. The U.S. wanted to involve the Surinamese resistance in The Netherlands in this action. During their final

meeting, Hale explained to Haakmat that the U.S. had no further interest in pursuing military action against the Bouterse regime. Several matters contributed to this decision: firstly, the U.S. could not count on Dutch support; and secondly, Bouterse no longer posed a threat. Shortly after the U.S. invasion of Grenada, Bouterse had expelled all Cubans from Surinam and entirely backed away from Cuba and Cuban-style politics (Haakmat, De revolutie 201-211).

According to Bob Woodward several Surinamese exiles requested the CIA for support shortly after the December murders had taken place. They requested CIA assistance in order to overthrow the Bouterse regime. CIA Director William 'Bill' Casey supported the proposal. He and Deputy Director for Operations John N. McMahon drew up an "enabling finding" which initiated a covert action designed to discover whether the Bouterse regime could indeed be removed. President Reagan gave the CIA permission to gather intelligence from within Surinam concerning the feasibility of a coup. Both the Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives could not be persuaded by McMahon's arguments in favour of U.S. supported actions. The Senate as well as the House disapproved of the enabling finding, despite the actual threat of Cuban influence in Surinam and the fact that the actions required only low-intensity U.S. involvement. The assigned CIA team reported that a coup would hardly be viable; resultantly, the plan was dropped altogether (Woodward 172-173). Still, the Reagan administration and the CIA remained interested in some sort of intervention act and resultantly supported and aided the Brazilian secret service with a covert operation. Secret agents posing as teachers were sent to Surinam in order to push the Surinam government away from Cuban ideologies (Woodward 184).

As George Shultz puts it, the Dutch government initiated contact with the U.S. upon matters in Surinam. "The Dutch government in The Hague was alarmed but unwilling to act

alone in response to these atrocities. They asked to consult with the United States . . . As an immediate reaction to the killings, we and the Dutch suspended our aid programmes and announced that our relationships with Suriname were under review” (Shultz 293). Later, these consults led to a proposal by Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders for a cooperative effort to remove the Bouterse regime; despite the fact that the Dutch government was unwilling to resort to direct military intervention. “Later that day Enders proposed, on behalf of the State Department at a Crisis Pre-Planning Group (CPPG) meeting, that despite the evident Dutch misgivings, we approach them with a suggestion: if they would send a military force into Suriname, the U.S. Navy would interpose itself between Suriname and Cuba to prevent the Cubans from coming to Bouterse's assistance” (Shultz 293). With the approval of President Reagan, an emissary was sent to The Hague with the proposal (Shultz 294). Awaiting Dutch response, the Crisis Pre-Planning Group presented its conclusions. Meanwhile, the governments of Venezuela and Brazil, who were eager for some sort of action, were consulted upon the matter. The Dutch Prime Minister Lubbers was forced to reject the plan, because it could lead to a crisis in the cabinet (Shultz 295- 296). The Dutch unwillingness put a strain on the U.S. initiative. Although Reagan was willing to consider intervention without help from the Dutch, such an effort would only be successful if the Dutch government would assist in rebuilding Surinam's democracy (Shultz 295-296). Any overt military actions seemed out of the question and the Reagan administration started to explore the options for a covert operation. The CIA presented a plan which involved an assault out of Venezuela into Paramaribo by Korean commando's. The idea was far fetched and therefore discarded. Congress fervently disapproved of any covert action in Surinam. Problems in Surinam remained and the Reagan team was unable to come up with effective counteractions (Shultz 296-297). A few days after the U.S. had intervened in Grenada, Bouterse changed course and broke all ties with Cuba (Shultz 344).



According to William Blum, in December 1982, CIA Director William Casey told the House and Senate intelligence committees that President Reagan had authorised the CIA to try to overthrow Desi Bouterse, who was supposedly leading his country into "the Cuban orbit." Even though Congress did not endorse the covert operation, the administration went ahead with the preparations. A force of circa three hundred Florida-based mercenaries, consisting of Northern and Southern Americans as well as Surinamese, was scheduled to invade the country on 1 July 1983. It was called off only after being discovered by the Dutch internal security agency BVD (*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*) (Blum 211).

There are several evident similarities within each of the stories. First of all, the U.S. was very much interested in toppling the Bouterse regime and the administration ordered officials and CIA agents to investigate the feasibility of military counter measures. Any overt action seemed inconceivable due to lack of support either by Congress or the Dutch government. Subsequently, the U.S. looked into the possibility of a covert action. Although the actual content of the various covert action plans differed from one and other, what they had in common was foreign participation. Eventually, none of the mentioned plans were carried out.

### § 1.3 *American and Dutch Intelligence Activities*

The December murders were officially presented as the results of an attempt to prevent a counter coup supported by a foreign power. The United States as well as The Netherlands have been named in this case. The suspected connection between Roy Horb and the U.S, especially the CIA, forms an important part of the conspiracy theory.

During the period from the sergeants coup up to the murders, the CIA and the Dutch intelligence agency for foreign affairs IDB (*Inlichtingendienst Buitenland*) regularly met in

Washington or The Hague to discuss the situation in Surinam. In January 1982 the Dutch government sent the head of its ground force military intelligence agency (LAMID), Colonel A.W. Schulte, to Washington with two messages: the Dutch government had decided to support Surinam's intelligence service as a precautionary matter against Cuban influence, and the government would like the Reagan administration to pursue stabilisation policies instead of confrontational policies whereas Surinam was concerned. During Schulte's visit both sides also made new agreements on how to improve the lines of communication. LAMID's connections with Bouterse's intelligence service provided them valuable inside information (de Graaff and Wiebes 363-364).

The CIA received its information from a source even closer to Bouterse, Roy Horb. He supposedly delivered the list with 23 names to the U.S. before the executions had taken place. It is uncertain whether the Dutch authorities were aware of the list (de Graaff and Wiebes 364-365). Since the fall of 1982, the Reagan administration had integrated Surinam in its roll-back policies; Surinam was named as one of the "soft targets" at the periphery of the Soviet empire (de Graaff and Wiebes 367). The U.S. used the information which they received from Horb to make plans for an intervention. Horb's involvement with the CIA was exposed by two subsequent events. First of all, Horb received two horses as a thanks for his assistance. They arrived by a U.S. military transport flight, shortly after the December murders had occurred. Secondly a letter by his hand addressed to the United States and CIA had been found at the American embassy. The CIA determined that the letter was forged merely to denominate Horb as a betrayer. Horb's mysterious death at Fort Zeelandia gave rise to discussion between the involved U.S. parties. The CIA was reprimanded for the mistreatment of the Horb case (Verhey and Westerloo 63-65; de Graaff and Wiebes 365-366).

Directly after the December murders had taken place, the U.S. put an anti-terror unit named Delta Force into action. Small teams infiltrated Paramaribo (de Graaff and Wiebes

367). The unit also received preparative military training for the invasion of Surinam. A few months later they would benefit from this training on Grenada (Bibeau n. pag.). The Netherlands refused to partake in such a venture, because the IDB had determined that there was no acceptable alternative to Bouterse (de Graaff and Wiebes 367). Installing an adequate governor was a top-priority if The Netherlands wanted to restore order and democracy in Surinam. Shortly after the Grenada intervention had taken place, contact between the CIA and the various Dutch intelligence agencies lessened. Not until 1986 did they initiate a cooperative effort to remove Bouterse. The plan stranded on the fact that there was still no suitable replacement for Bouterse (de Graaff and Wiebes 368).

Bouterse's assumption that a countercoup had been contrived in cooperation with the U.S. and The Netherlands was not that farfetched. The CIA was indeed active in Surinam in the period before the December murders. However, actual measures and plans were not devised until after the murders.

#### § 1.4 *Surinam versus Grenada*

On 24 October 1983, almost a year after the December murders had taken place in Surinam, the U.S. invaded Grenada. At that time, Grenada had been ruled by the leftist PRG, headed by Maurice Bishop, for nearly four years. Since the beginning of the year 1983, Bernard Coard had openly challenged Bishop's leadership. On 19 October the military, by Coard's order, executed Bishop and several of his associates. On the face of it, both the Grenadian and the Surinam case seem alike. Both cases deal with a leftist regime which had strong ties with the military and murdered its political adversaries. Nevertheless, the Reagan administration chose not to intervene in Surinam. Therefore, there must have been some significant differences

between the cases. If these differences cannot solely be found within the cases themselves, than U.S. decision making must also have been influenced by other external factors.

Concerning intervention in Surinam George Shultz states: “opposing political pressures would be too strong without some triggering event of undeniable and immediate effect on American interests to spur the call for U.S. action” (Shultz 296). The American people and Congress were reluctant to engage in a military intervention because of the failure of the Vietnam War. If the Reagan administration wanted to prevent social and political unrest, it needed to convince both the public and Congress that American interests were at stake. The situation in Grenada presented the U.S. government with such a “triggering event.” The U.S. students trapped on Grenada were in direct physical danger and had to be saved. In the case of Surinam there were no events which would have “undeniable and immediate effect on American interest”. Without such an event, both Congress and the American people would condemn military action in Surinam.

The airport that was being constructed on Grenada in cooperation with Cuba was a visible threat to U.S. security. Intelligence showed the presence of a Cuban transport ship, the *Heroic Vietnam*, in Grenada’s harbour. Next to that, at least six hundred Cubans with military training were reportedly assisting with the construction of the new airstrip. The administration also claimed to possess photographic proof of Cuban military barracks on the island (Woodward 206-207; Shultz 341). No or little proof existed of Cuban military presence in Surinam. Contact between the Cuban military and the Surinamese only occurred on Cuban grounds. Several of Bouterse’s bodyguards claimed to have received military training on Cuba where they learned how to set up a people’s militia and improve their fighting skills (Gevangenen 47-48). Cuban-Surinam relations were mainly political not military. The administration did express its concern for the Cuban ambassador Osvaldo Cardenas: “The Cuban ambassador is a senior intelligence officer who was formerly Chief of the Caribbean

Section of the Americas Department of the Cuban Communist Party. The Americas Department is responsible for Cuban covert actions. The Cuban Ambassador has a very close relationship with LTC Bouterse” (United States. Department of State. Current Documents. 1983. 1241). The threat to the Latin-American region and thereby the United States from within Surinam’s borders was much less obvious than was the case with Grenada. Moreover, Surinam constituted far less of a threat to the Latin American region than for example Nicaragua. The weapons trade, infiltrations and assaults on neighbouring countries had made Nicaragua quite influential in Central America.

The U.S. decided not to intervene in Surinam due to the lack of Dutch support. This information strengthened the Dutch standpoint that stabilisation policies instead of confrontational policies should be applied to the Surinam case. Although the United States could not count on British support for the Grenadian intervention project as well, they could count on support from the OECS member states. In fact, the venture was a joined action between the U.S. and OECS. Brazil and Venezuela were eager to take part in an action against Bouterse. Nevertheless, they had not requested U.S. assistance as the OECS had done. Intervention in Surinam would thus be a strictly U.S. initiative. Without any foreign request for military aid, the Reagan administration would experience much difficulty in legitimising intervention by its rights under the UN and OAS charters.

The intervention in Grenada was a success: the Grenadian people supported the action; the costs, financially as well as the costs in human life, had been relatively low; and the results were clearly perceptible (Carothers, Democracy 115). Without foreign support and assistance, the chances for success in Surinam were much smaller. The U.S. expected little assistance from the Surinamese resistance. They were unorganised and seemed reluctant and unable to take any military action against the Bouterse regime.

At the end of the year 1982, the U.S. had to divide its attention between Nicaragua, El Salvador, Surinam and the ongoing civil war in Chad. Early 1983, Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi invaded Chad. The U.S. intervened in cooperation with Chad's former colonial power France, and Egypt. The fact that a cooperative military operation was more likely to take place in Chad than in Surinam might have drawn the administration's immediate attention away from Surinam. Intervening in Surinam was no longer worth the effort.

In reality the situation in Surinam posed little direct threat to U.S security. Taking action without any form of support from a foreign power as well as the American public would put the Reagan administration in a very vulnerable position. These and several other factors led to an entirely different decision making process for the Surinam case than the Grenada case.

### § 1.5 *Conclusion*

Most of the reports referred to in this chapter are based on non-official sources; they consist of personal memories, interviews with involved parties and secret documents. Hence the truth content of these stories as they are represented by the authors is something to be debated. Still, every rumour has some foundation. The CIA had already been active in Surinam before the December murders took place, but its activities intensified in the period following the executions in Fort Zeelandia. As an immediate reaction to the murders, the U.S. followed the example of The Netherlands and many other countries and withdrew its financial aid. Additionally, the Reagan administration sent out CIA operatives and specialised military units in preparation of a possible military intervention. Circumstances however thwarted U.S. initiatives and military action, both overt and covert, was not realised. Thus, in the case of

Surinam, the Reagan administration did indeed pursue activities which were in accordance with the policies which the U.S. had outlined for the Latin American region.

## Conclusion

Initially, the takeover by Desi Bouterse and his fellow military officers was regarded as a positive development by the international community as well as the Surinamese. Shortly after the revolution of the sergeants had taken place, Bouterse became strongly influenced by the leftist members of the *Nationale Militaire Raad*, Mijnsals; Joeman and Sital. Bouterse changed his political course and began to pursue a more socialist line. On advice of Surinam's Minister of Foreign Affairs Harvey Naarendorp, Bouterse maintained relations with socialist revolutionaries such as Grenada's Maurice Bishop and Cuba's Fidel Castro. Bouterse's socialist course was not received with equal enthusiasm; certain members of the government, the Surinam people, and some military officials disagreed with his policies. This feeling of disagreement amongst the Surinamese eventually led to various forms of public resistance.

The United States government was very much aware of Surinam's movement towards communism. The Reagan administration had an ardent desire to eliminate all communist influence from the Latin American region. The administration especially focussed on the countries of Central America and the Caribbean. Due to their geographical position they were of great importance to U.S. security; they were close to U.S. borders, important seaways and the Soviet Union's satellite state Cuba. As far as the Reagan team was concerned, communist takeover of the U.S. hinterland was an imminent threat. The effects of communist influence were clearly visible in Surinam. With Surinam so close to oil supplier Venezuela and important seaways, its communist tendencies might pose a threat to U.S. interests. Therefore, the U.S. closely monitored the behaviour and activities of the Bouterse regime.

The severity of the events which had taken place during the three days surrounding the December murders shocked the international community. Many countries suspended their



financial aid, hoping this would lead the Surinamese authorities away from leftism. Especially the loss of Dutch development aid had great impact on Surinam's economic wellbeing. Most countries shied away from taking military action against Surinam's military authority, except for the United States. The political mindset of the Reagan administration differed from that in other countries. The U.S. primarily focussed on the communist threat, whereas other countries were primarily concerned with the violation of human rights, the radical behaviour of the military regime, and the overall impact of the crime itself.

The will to overthrow Bouterse's military regime was strong amongst many of the members of the Reagan administration, but they encountered several problems that withheld them from taking military action. First of all, the administration preferred to act within the policies of the Reagan Doctrine. That is, to aid anti-communist guerrillas in their battle against communist governments. Unfortunately, there were no Surinamese that had the ability or the will to resort to military action against the Bouterse regime. The Surinamese resistance in The Netherlands was poorly organised and many of its members preferred to follow Dutch policy and enforce changes in Surinam through political and economic measures. Furthermore, in order to legitimise a military intervention in Surinam and to make it a success, the U.S. needed support from Surinam's former colonial ruler, The Netherlands. Next to that, Dutch participation meant less risk and liability for the U.S. The Dutch government, however, was not interested in any form of military intervention. An overt operation was therefore out of the question. In a final attempt to bring down Bouterse, the Reagan administration orchestrated several CIA assisted covert operations from within the U.S. and countries adjacent to Surinam. The problem was that these plans always involved assistance from another foreign power and were often so complex that they were actually not feasible.

So far it can be concluded that during the early 1980s the United States did take political and CIA action against Surinam in order to push the country away from communist

influences. These activities peaked in the period directly after the December murders had taken place. Although the Reagan administration made many plans for military intervention, their attempts failed, because the administration was unable to produce effective countermeasures.

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Appendix I

December murders victims



Kenneth Carlos  
Goncalves

d.o.b. 16/11/1940  
solicitor



Cornelis Harold  
Riedewald

d.o.b. 12/01/1933  
solicitor



Edmund Alexander  
Hoost

d.o.b. 21/10/1934  
solicitor



John Khemraadj  
Baboeram

d.o.b. 08/09/1951  
solicitor



Cyril Richard  
Duncan Daal

d.o.b. 29/05/1936  
union leader



Lesley Paul  
Rahman

d.o.b. 24/09/1954  
journalist



Frank Wijngaarde

d.o.b. 14/08/1939  
journalist



Abraham Maurits  
Behr

d.o.b. 18/01/1951  
journalist



Jozef Hubert Maria  
Slagveer

d.o.b. 25/01/1940  
journalist



Rudi Andre  
Kamperveen

d.o.b. 27/09/1924  
executive director  
Radio ABC



Robby Somradj  
Sohansing

d.o.b. 04/06/1945  
businessman



Sugrim Oemrawsing

d.o.b. 25/08/ 1940  
university professor



Gerard Leckie

d.o.b. 06/05/1943  
university professor



Soerindre  
Rambocus

d.o.b. 05/05/1953  
army officer



Djiewansing  
Sheombar

d.o.b. 15/03/1957  
army officer

(photo's taken from: Waterkant Suriname. <http://www.waterkant.net/special/8december.html>)



## LATIN-AMERICA

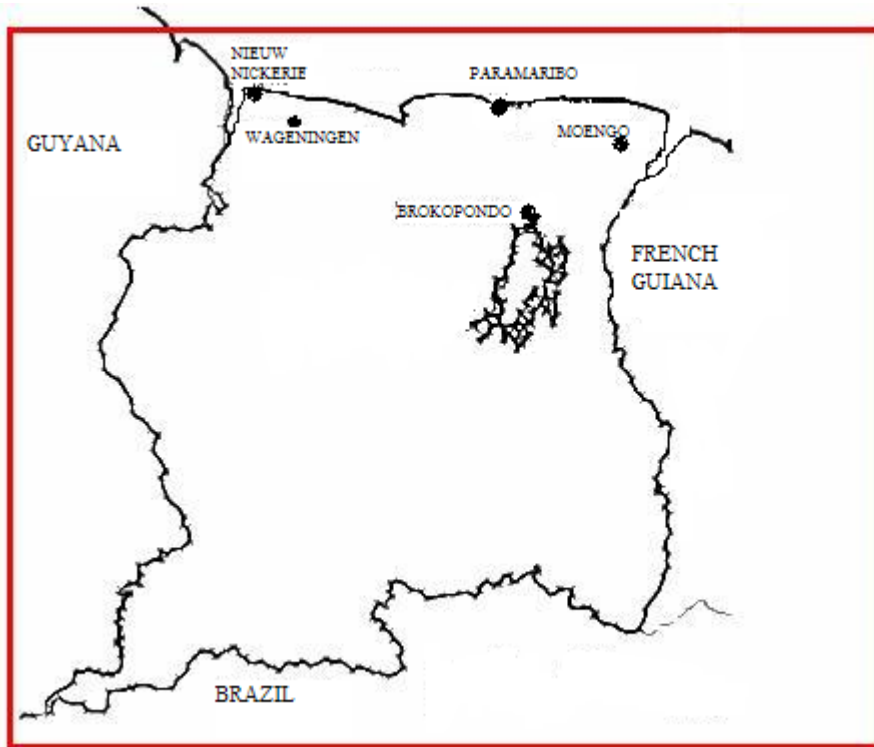


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## Central America & The Caribbean



## SURINAM



*NIVD: Nederlandse Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdiensten*

Dutch intelligence and security service

*LAMID: Landmacht Inlichtingendienst*

Ground forces intelligence agency

*MARID: Marine Inlichtingendienst*

Marine intelligence agency

*IDB: Inlichtingendienst Buitenland*

Intelligence agency for foreign affairs