

## *From the desk of Armand Zunder*

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 Date : June 22th 2004

## Reparations to Suriname

### I. Introduction

When the Spanish expansionists rediscovered Suriname at the end of the 16th Century they encountered the Indigenous people of that Territory. At that time their number was around 70.000. The Spanish expansionists took their Land and furthermore enslaved them. After the Spanish expansionists left they were replaced by British and Dutch expansionists. At the census of 1919/1920 around 1.400 Indigenous people were left in Suriname. These people virtually disappeared as a result of:

- Contagious diseases that the European expansionists brought with them to the New World;
- The losses they suffered during the wars with the intruders;
- Alcohol abuse;
- Destruction of their agricultural grounds by the intruders;
- Sexual misconduct of the intruders towards Indigenous women drove many into suicide.

In May 1697 the Dutch exposed their production plan for their newly seized colony Suriname from the British. It was their intention to produce on at least 1.000 only sugar plantation enterprises 120 million kilograms of sugar for the Amsterdam Commodity Market. The expected returns amounted at an annual turnover of 67 million in prices of those days. In reality the Dutch managed to produce no more than around 10 percent of the forecast.

In order to produce these expected revenues the Dutch and other Expansionists organized the massive forced migration of Africans to the New World. It is expected that 300.000 to 350.000 Africans were enslaved and shipped to Suriname. For calculation purposes we use the average amount of 325.000 persons. These voyages continued for centuries, until due to different circumstances slavery was abolished in 1863. At the date of the Abolition the number of enslaved was 32.911. This implies that 292.089 Afro-Surinamese did not survive this Maafa.

One of the conditions for the Abolition was the compensation of the Slaveholders for their "Human Stock" It was agreed upon between the Dutch Government and the Slaveholders that they would receive an average amount of 300 guilders per enslaved person. The cash value of that amount, discounted at 3 percent amounts to 322 million euro as per July 2004.

Furthermore the former enslaved persons were obliged to work at least 10 more years on the plantation enterprises.

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<sup>1</sup> Armand Zunder is a graduate of the University of Amsterdam. He is specialized in finance, economics, marketing and regional planning. He served his country briefly as a Minister of Development Planning in 1980. In that same year he established the Insurance Company Self-Reliance in Suriname. In 1983 he left Suriname and was employed as a Senior Economist at the Money and Capital Market Division of the Central Bank of the Netherlands. In 1985 he established another Insurance Company, this time in Curaçao. Since 1990 he operates as an Independent Financial Consultant. In 2003 he finalised a thorough research on the Economic History of Suriname. His research indicates a complete different perspective on the Economic History of that country. The result of his research project will be published in a brochure in June 2004 called: "Suriname a Dutch creation and Money making Business" and a book in August 2004 called: "Suriname, The Dutch Best Kept Secret". In the book Zunder will introduce the matter of Restitutions and Reparations to Suriname.

From 1873 on the Dutch colonialists imported workers from China, India, the West-Indies, and Java into Suriname to continue the production in the agricultural sector. This continued until the beginning of World War II. These contract workers were also highly maltreated and suffered a lot.

During the period 1683-1940 the Dutch exploited the Suriname economy to their benefit. The registered exports to the Dutch Staple Markets, located in the City of Amsterdam amounted to more than f. 1.7 billion guilders of that time. The present value of that amount if discounted at 3 percent is 238 billion euro<sup>2</sup> as per July 1st 2004. While the Dutch Governments accommodated their Merchant bankers to do business in Suriname and to accumulate these fortunes investments in the Surinamese economy were almost nil. So all these fortunes migrated to Amsterdam and Zeeland, where investments preferably were conducted in processing industries, warehouses and luxury dwellings along the canals of Amsterdam. The consequence of the squeezing colonial policies on the economy of the colony Suriname around 1940 were:

- the infrastructure was in a terrible condition;
- no adequate education;
- no adequate social housing
- inadequate savings in the Government sector, the business sector and among the population.

As a matter of facts there was a need for almost everything one could think of!

## **II. Reparations**

### **II.1. Restitutions: The methodology**

Suriname should demand restitutions from the Netherlands for the social-economic neglect. From this perspective Suriname should demand an amount of 20 percent of the calculated sum that Merchant-bankers could extract from the Surinamese community during the period 1683-1940. From this amount the Dutch may deduct the amount of 4.3 billion euro that they have donated as tied development aid to Suriname during the period 1947-2004. The total amount for the restitutions amounts to 43.7 billion euro.

### **II.2. Reparations for human suffering: The methodology**

When calculating reparations for human suffering one should keep in mind that these figures are symbolic, since human suffering cannot and should not be expressed in monetary terms. This especially counts for forced labor and continuous and extreme suffering.

Reparations for human suffering starts with the illegal removal of the land of the Indigenous people of Surinam and their enslavement.

In this Maaafa (Pylono or Ymakary) that lasted from around the period 1640-1825 approximately 68.600 people disappeared. As a reference point we take the amount of f. 300 per person that was paid out to the plantation enterprise owners in 1863. The payout than

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<sup>2</sup> On June 2004 the money market rate of the euro to the US\$. was: 1 euro for 1.2045 US\$.

amounts to 20.580 million guilders. This amount is discounted at 3 percent per year as per July 1st 2004.

The amount for the reparations for the suffering of these ancestors amount to 61 billion euro. One should take into consideration that this amount does not include the taking by force of the Land of these ancestors without even paying one cent for the lease or ownership!

Reparations for human suffering for the Afro-Surinamese, who have been enslaved from around 1650-1863. During this period around 292.089 people disappeared during this Maafa (Maskaderie). This number is multiplied by the aforementioned amount of f. 300. The result is an amount of f. 88 million. To this amount the amount of f.100 per person is added for tools and equipment to be able to start a business after the Abolition of Slavery. This subtotal amounts to f. 3.3 million. The total amount is discounted at 3 percent as per July 1st 2004. The amount for the reparations to these ancestors amount to 10.4 billion euros.

Reparations for the Maafa (Deesh Doer Ghatna/India, Pebenbunnuh/Java) of the contract workers from India and from Java. Oedraydsing Varma calculated an amount for 3 billion for the contract workers from India as per 1994. We add the same amount for the suffering of the contract workers from Java.

The total amount is discounted at 3 percent as per July 1st 2004. At that date this amount reaches the level of 2.5 billion euro as reparations to these ancestors.

So the total symbolic amount for the human suffering as per July 1<sup>st</sup> 2004 amounts to 74.1 billion euros.

In conclusion:

Restitution for the social-economic disaster	: 43.7 billion euro.
Reparations for human suffering	: 74.1 billion euros.
Total amount	: 117.8 billion euros.