

2nd PPP Government

Members of the 1957 Cabinet with Governor Sir Ralph Grey. (Photo taken in 1960)



When the British thought it had everything under control, and had manipulated the constituency boundaries, it held general elections in 1957. The PPP won 9 of the 14 seats, the PNC 3. In fact the votes received by Cheddi Jagan were more than the combined support of the 5 opposition seats and he became Minister of Trade and Industry.

The years 1957-1964 were the period of the PPP in office but not in power. The government was deemed PPP, but the real power remained in the hands of the Governor. Dr. Jagan had the opportunity for the first time to embark upon the program of social and economic reform for which he had advocated over the years. They were successful in opening up agriculture, providing benefits to workers and improved the health and education system. On the constitutional front the PPP embarked on a campaign for cabinet status and independence.



When Janet Jagan became Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, malaria was practically wiped out, a mass campaign was launched to wipe out filaria and children throughout our country were inoculated with anti-polio vaccine and an anti-typhoid scheme was also launched. New health centers were constructed. Cottage Hospitals along with maternity and child welfare clinics were established in all parts of the country. It was under her guidance that pure water supply was spread throughout the countryside. In housing great progress was made both in towns and country areas. The logies on the sugar estates were eliminated, and extra Nuclear Housing Schemes were created. Working people made rapid progress both in wages and conditions of work. Domestic, watchmen, quarry workers, rural cinemas, groceries, etc., were protected by the Ministry.



With Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister of the newly independent Ghana in 1957 (above).



With Paul Robeson the great American singer and freedom fighter in 1958 while in England.



PPP members in Parliament during the 1957-1961 period. Because the PPP had reached its goals and truly represented the working people, it had no trouble winning the 1961 election.

While in prison, Dr. Jagan's fight for better conditions for prisoners continued throughout his term, causing him to be taken before the Superintendent of Prisons on more than one occasion, and being charged for organizing hunger strikes of protest. He wrote articles on prison conditions, exposed the poor state of meals, and led prison protests. In prison he organized a reading circle for prisoners and arranged for literature (mostly political) to come into the prison clandestinely, so that prisoners could read and learn.



Photo of Janet Jagan entering the Georgetown prison in 1954

Janet was imprisoned a few days before the release of her husband, for holding an alleged political meeting. She spent six months in prison with hard labour. Because she was locked up with criminals, life in prison was much harder for her than it had been for her husband who had been locked up with other political prisoners.



Crowd waiting outside Georgetown prison for Dr. Jagan to be released.

"Today, Guyana is a vast prison. Whether I am outside or inside matters little. Prison holds no terror for me. I expect no justice from this or any other Court. Justice has been dead since the British troops landed. I am looking to the day when there will be greater justice in Guyana."

Cheddi Jagan



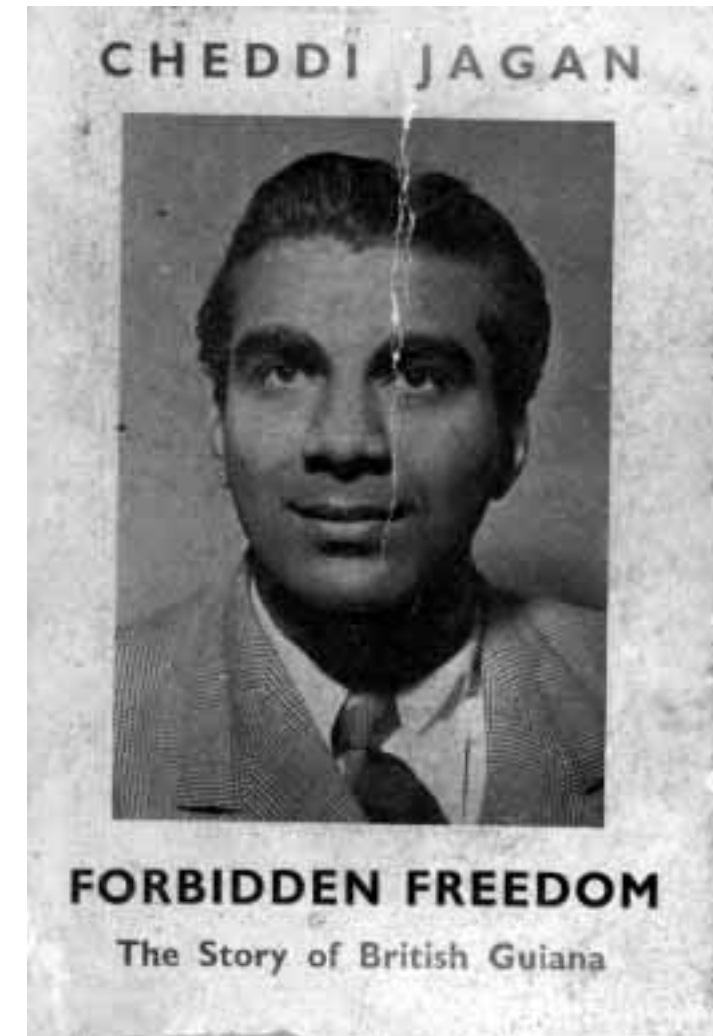
With his daughter Nadira, who was born in October 1955.

At this juncture, Guyana experienced a bitter period in its history and many of its current problems can find their roots in the sad days of British occupation. The British used all its experience at subversion and division to maintain its rule. It did everything possible to break the PPP and its mass support. And there were many willing opportunists of the local brand ready to do their bidding. The most significant success of the British was the split in the PPP in 1955.

Burnham's first attempt to take over the party before the 1953 elections was defeated but in the aftermath of October 9, he tried again and ultimately split the PPP in 1955. He founded the People's National Congress (PNC) party in 1957, helped by the British who supported what they believed were his more moderate politics.



Cheddi Jagan in 1953.



This is a copy of the original book "Forbidden Freedom" written by Dr. Jagan after the suspension of the constitution to explain to the world what had occurred in British Guiana and to expose the lies written about the PPP. It was published in 1954 while he was in prison.

"I for one do not intend to play the role of stooge colonial leader such as Britain loves to parade before the world. I will not rest until my country is free." Cheddi Jagan

Iron Rule and Treachery - 1953-1957

A visit to the ancient pyramids of Egypt in 1953.



Cheddi and Janet at home in 1953.



On Friday, October 9, 1953 British warships landed in Georgetown harbour, dispatching marines and other troops, the Constitution was suspended and the PPP was thrown out of office. This was the beginning of a period of martial law, of curfews, restrictions on the movements of certain leading members of the PPP, the curtailment of most civil liberties, detention, searches and imprisonment.

The PPP issued a statement urging the people to remain calm, quiet but firm. They called for non-violence and non-co-operation, civil disobedience and passive resistance.



Cheddi Jagan addressing the Lok Sabha (parliament) in India in 1953. Prime Minister Nehru and Burnham are sitting next to him.



A wave of terror against the PPP, its leaders and the working people ensued. Cheddi Jagan's movements were restricted after his return from India. As part of the Party's civil disobedience campaign he broke the restriction order by the colonialists, was arrested on April 3, 1954 (photo above) and brought back to Georgetown. He was released on bail. While walking back to his surgery, a crowd began to gather behind him (photo below). He was re-arrested along with 16 other leading members of the party and held at Brickdam Police Station overnight. He was put on trial the next day and he was sent to prison for six months, with hard labour.



The PPP leadership decided that Cheddi and Burnham should go to London to brief the British Parliament and put their case to the British public. They also visited India and Egypt to protest the suspension of the Constitution.

In the photo above PPP supporters give them a cheering send-off at Atkinson Airport.



Dr. Jagan with Burnham on steps of plane that would take them to London on October 19, 1953.

First PPP Government

Cheddi Jagan, Forbes Burnham and Governor Savage in 1953 on the grounds of Government House.



The year 1953 was one of great historical importance to all Guyanese. It was the year when, organized and led by the newly-formed People's Progressive Party, a resounding success was obtained at the first elections ever held under Universal Adult Suffrage (which had been introduced due to the agitation of the PPP). The PPP won 18 of the 24 seats.

Trouble began when it was time to select ministers. Burnham demanded to be "leader or nothing." The party was plunged into a crisis for nearly a week. It ended with a compromise in the naming of ministers, including Janet Jagan's being dropped. The new government was formed, headed by 35 year old Cheddi Jagan as Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Mines. Real power, however, continued to reside in the hands of the British. The PPP was in office but not in power!

Jagan's first term in office lasted only 133 days, from the opening of parliament on May 30 to the suspension of the constitution on October 9 and the arrival of British troops.

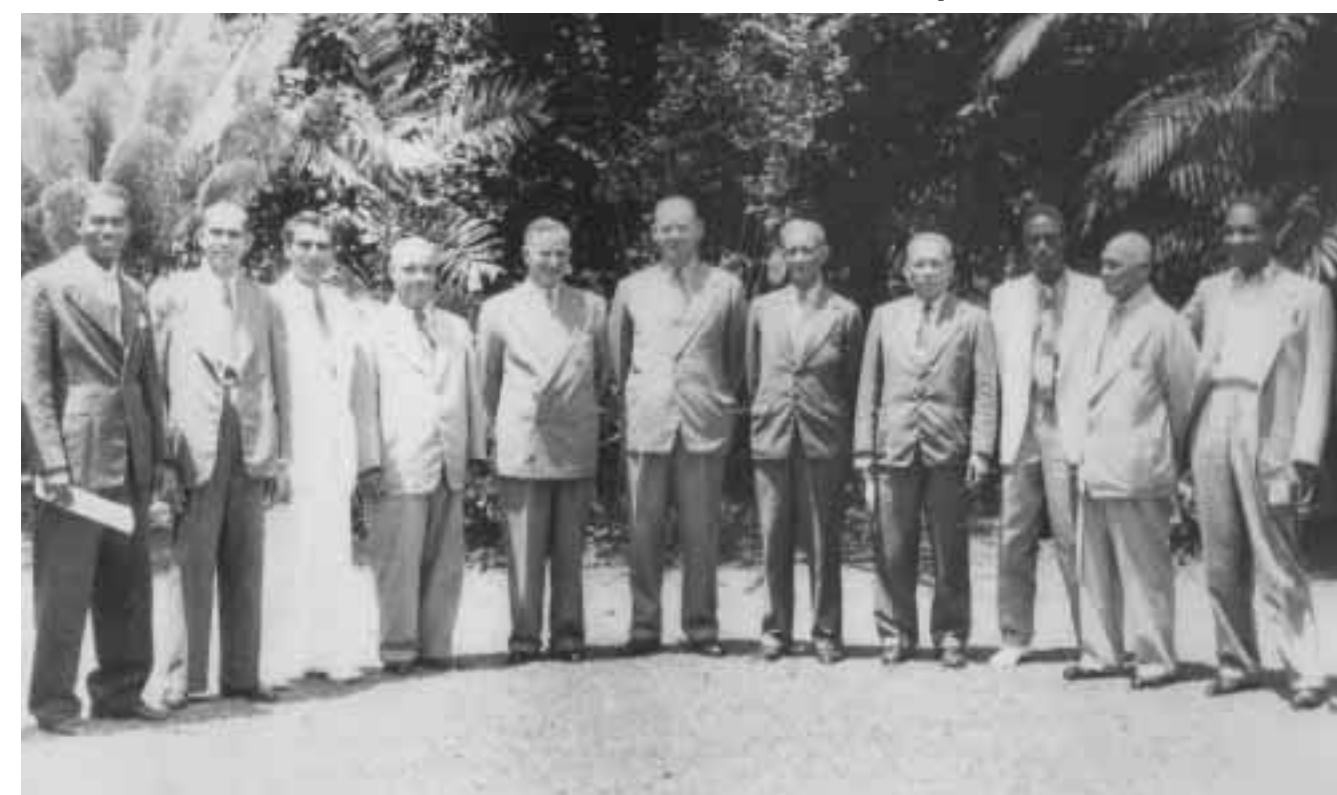


Cheddi and Janet Jagan with PPP members Pandit Sama Persaud, Sydney King and Mohammed Khan in 1953.

Photo of Janet Jagan with the 1953 cabinet members: Dr. Latchmansingh, Sydney King, Forbes Burnham, Janet Jagan, Cheddi Jagan, Jai Narine Singh and Ashton Chase. Mrs. Jagan was not a member of the cabinet. Her name had been dropped because of Burnham's opportunistic machinations.



The PPP in office fought for and won some significant changes for the people. The subversive literature law was repealed; the first steps for the removal of church control of the schools were made; and a battle was waged over the right of workers to be represented by the union of their choice by way of a poll. (Those were the days when MPCA was foisted on the sugar workers who were denied the right to join a trade union of their choice). It was on this issue, as well as others considered by the British to be controversial, that the British government made the decision to remove the PPP from office and suspend the Constitution.



Members of the 1953 PPP Government which included Ashton Chase, Cheddi Jagan, Sydney King, Dr. Latchmansingh and Forbes Burnham.

Formation of the PPP

On the political front, the most significant event was the formation of the People's Progressive Party in January 1950, with Cheddi Jagan as leader, L.F.S. Burnham as chairman and Janet Jagan as general secretary. They replaced their duplicated PAC *Bulletin* with the printed *Thunder*, as the official PPP organ, to help counter the propaganda of government and big business.

Their activities on the legislative, political and industrial fronts increased the awareness of the workers and led to actions which resulted in significant gains. On the industrial front, with strike after strike, they forced the employers to make many concessions.

On the political front, the party achieved its first success at the Georgetown Municipal Elections in 1950 when they contested three of the nine wards. Janet and Cheddi Jagan and L. F. S. Burnham, were the party's candidates. Cheddi and Burnham lost, but Janet won and became the first representative of the working class to grace the Municipal Council in recent times



The biggest gains were made on the constitutional front. Because of the PPP's continuous agitation the Waddington Constitution Commission visited British Guiana in late 1950. The PPP delegation in its presentation to it, called for an advanced constitution and the introduction of universal adult suffrage.



Cheddi Jagan with other delegates at the Caribbean Conference held in Curacao in December 1950. At that conference he proposed a motion calling for independence for all the colonial territories.



In 1951 Dr. Jagan made his first trip to the United Kingdom and Europe with a twofold objective: to attend the World Youth Festival in Berlin (photo above) and to have discussions with the Colonial Office on the question of independence. While there he spoke at public meetings calling for immediate independence for British Guiana and the West Indies. Throughout his life he has fought for the peoples rights and for world peace.



Cheddi Jagan with delegates from World Youth Festival in Berlin.



Janet Jagan at Copenhagen Women's Conference in 1953. In 1952 she and Cheddi were the first post-war prohibited immigrants in the Caribbean. Trinidad and Grenada banned them.