

SPEECH OF DR. CHEDDI JAGAN, DELIVERED

IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

On this Republic Day, I rise to speak with mixed feelings. Universal adult suffrage, voting at eighteen, self government, independence, republic - these were the dreams we dreamed. We wanted to sever the umbilical cord with Britain. We wanted to be free.

With the exception of voting at 18, these things have been achieved. We should be rejoicing. But, unfortunately, there is little to shout about. The real freedom which we fought for has eluded us. Instead of a new liberation, we have a new servitude.

True, the Queen Victoria statue no longer commands the Law Courts compound, and the British sovereigns, past and present, and the British heroes of yesteryear no longer adorn our august chamber.

But these are mere trappings. Our masters do not really object to their removal. They have a certain historical flexibility. From the days of slavery to the present time, they have made certain accommodations, surrendering symbols and forms, but substance, never. Today, they prefer to use honeyed words like "cooperation" and "partnership" and to substitute black, brown and yellow men for white men, the better to achieve their objectives. We do not see much cause for rejoicing for what we see is merely a change of form, not of substance. Actually, republican status should have come on the attainment of independence. Had that been done, there would have been no necessity for all the ballyhoo, the demagoguery, and the gimmickry today.

The fact is our beloved country is retrogressing instead of progressing. All that independence and republicanism stand for are being violated in Guyana. And its Government is being carried on with concessions being freely made to corruption, patronage and nepotism at all levels. Over all hang both the threat under the National Security Act of restriction and detention without trial, and the fear under the proposed Trade Disputes Bill of the abolition of the right to strike. The state apparatus is a vehicle not for the suppression of those who exploit our people and plunder our resources, but for attacks on the people. Political opponents of the Government are daily being intimidated, harassed and discriminated against. The barbaric practice of house-breaking for arrears of rentals reminiscent of the cruel measures applied in the days of slavery and indenture, is resorted to at Black Bush Polder.

Those who do not conform are ruthlessly weeded out. Pledges to the Amerindian people have been honoured in the breach, and they have been treated as second-class citizens, brow-beaten and coerced.

Yes, fear stalks the land. And instead of freedom from want, we have a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Foreign vested interests have become more entrenched, more exploitive and more ruthless. For their support of the bureaucratic capitalist elite, they receive more and more concessions.

Meanwhile, unemployment and underemployment soar, and crime, delinquency and prostitution increase. The cost of living mounts in the face of a wage freeze.

In this context of empty stomachs, discontent and disillusionment, the small man must be reassured. He will become the real man, he is told, under the Cooperative Republic. Cooperatives will become the dominant sector and will be the means, they claim, to bring socialism to Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, when will they stop fooling the people? The Prime Minister, the Minister of Information and I read the same classics in the good old days. The fathers of scientific socialism, Engels and Lenin, long ago exploded the myth that socialism can be achieved through the cooperative movement in peaceful competition with the monopoly-capitalists who own and control the commanding heights of the economy - the banks, insurance companies, factories, mines, plantations and foreign trade firms. They made it abundantly clear that it was utopian to think that contemporary society can be transformed into socialism without taking into account such fundamental questions as the class struggle, the capture of power by the working class and the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class.

These things our ex-comrades know, but they choose to practise the politics of deception. Let them come out with the truth. There is no such thing as a cooperative republic. Republics are either socialist or capitalist.

The slogan "cooperative republic" is a hoax, a fraud, to lull the Guyanese people into a false sense of security. It is a device to cloak, to hide the reality of a neo-colonialist, capitalist-imperialist republic.

The truth is cooperatives cannot succeed in such an environment. They will fail here as they have failed elsewhere. Four years ago, we told them that the 7-year development plan would fail. Today they have set it aside. The yet-to-be-born

cooperative plan will also die an abortive death.

The cooperatives will not bring socialism. Rather, it is only socialism which will permit of the growth and development of cooperatives. In Guyana, the cooperatives will only provide the cover for a new breed of privileged capitalist elite to use the state machine to get rich quick.

Mr. Speaker, our ex-comrades have killed a dream. Go back to the early 1950's. Ask the Prime Minister and the Minister of Information, the then Chairman and Executive Committee member respectively of the People's Progressive Party, whether our dreams when we had written socialism on our banner did not encompass economic emancipation and social justice, freedom from fear and freedom from want.

How can they honour our national hero Cuffy when they persecute those who are carrying on in his tradition?

How can they build a socialist society when the economic foundation and the political and ideological superstructure are becoming more and more under imperialist control; when our resources have been bartered away, and our country has been mortgaged and strangled by huge local and foreign debts; when the real producers are penalized, agriculture hindered and industrialization stifled; when agents of imperialism like Garner Ted Armstrong daily, from the Government radio station, poison the minds of the people with anti-scientific, anti-socialist and anti-working class ideas.

How can they build socialism when they refuse employment to those who have studied in socialist countries the theory and practice of socialism, and deny passports or the right to travel to others who are desirous of studying in universities in the socialist countries?

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to build a cooperative or socialist edifice on colonialist, neo-colonialist and imperialist foundations.

Yes, they have not only crushed a dream; they have also smothered hope. Thousands, disillusioned and frustrated are leaving our country.

They have silenced criticism. The Young Socialist Movement, the youth arm of the ruling party, has been bludgeoned into silence for their advocacy of socialism, of nationalization, of diplomatic, trade and cultural relations with Cuba and other socialist states.

They have betrayed a trust. They have sold out the people. While serving imperialism and building a retinue of hangers-on and yes-men, they are feeding the people with half-truths, slogans and gimmicks.

The depth of the depravity, arrogance and callousness of the Government was visibly demonstrated last evening at the National Park. At a most solemn occasion, who should read prayers on behalf of the Muslim Community? Not a representative of the United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman but a handpicked puppet, who like others today secure their positions through police intervention. Mr. Fazil became chairman of the Bushlot Local Authority simply because the police had detained Mr. Seegobin, himself a candidate, on the day of the election.

The PNC régime have brought Guyana to the crossroads. They must now make a clearcut decision. The decks are cleared. They now have a majority, albeit by fraud. They are not restricted in any way. There should be no more excuses.

If they cut out their Daimler-style living, abandon Duvalier methods, follow in the footsteps of Julius Nyerere and Fidel Castro and serve the people, we will march with them, we will back them. But we warn, if they continue with the imperialists, we will fight them. Our people deserve a better future and that they must and will have.

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