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STATEMENT

The large group of policemen, about 18 in number, unarmed and armed with guns and bayonets entered the compound of my residence at 65 Pln. Bel Air/about 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday, July 30, 1974. The armed policemen took up battle positions as if at war at various points of the compound.

My door bell was rung. I opened the door and was told by a plain-clothes policeman that he had a warrant to search my home. He read the warrant. I told them they could come in and search.

They went up to the upper level of my house and began to search my study. I asked to see the warrant which was given to me. I wanted to copy it but permission was refused by Supt. Bacchus in the presence and hearing of Asst. Supt. Carlton Augustus.

Soon after the search began, my wife telephoned me to say that Freedom House, (headquarters of the PPP) was being searched.

During the search, the policemen concentrated on personal letters, dairies and address books with no relationship whatever to guns and national security. I drew this to the attention of the policemen.

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Some time after the search began, Comrades Harry Persaud and Sase Narine entered the compound and came upstairs.

After they positioned themselves in the study, I told the policeman in charge that I would go to the dining room to continue with my work for the PPF Congress. At first he objected, but agreed on condition that another policeman come upstairs and stay with me. He sat with me at the dining table,

After a while when the policemen had finished searching the study, they moved in the direction of the dining room and went into the bedroom. They began to search the safe which had been left open. The keys were hanging on the door of the safe. After looking through some papers, a jewellery box and a passport folder for about 15 minutes, they found a small plastic box. This box was behind the files and was not visible on opening the safe. When asked about the ~~two~~ 2 bullets, I merely suggested that perhaps they were left over. ~~Questioned further about the three .22 bullets, I said 'I knew nothing about them.~~ Incidentally, I was never given any warning by

Supt. Bacchus as stated by Asst. Supt. Augustus.

They took the box with its contents and went out of the bedroom. I had never opened the box nor seen its contents. The bullets and magazine were never put there by me or with my knowledge or consent. I never exercised any physical control over the bullets or the magazine. I did not know that any bullet or magazine was in the safe.

In the dining room, they sat down with me after I said I wanted to see what else they were taking away - I made a note of the items:

1. 2 dairies belonging to my wife;
2. 2 ~~small~~ address books belonging to my wife;
3. 3 private letters;
4. A small pad of blank stationery - small size;
5. 2 or 3 pieces of papers with names written on them;
6. A draft press statement.

They went downstairs and searched the room next to the garage, after which, they went to the back and examined a tool (gardening) cabinet and the rear of the yard.

They found nothing.

I was then asked to accompany them to the station. I asked if I was being arrested, and the answer was yes.

I drove my car, with two policemen and Harry Persaud inside, to Eve Leary Police Compound. This was about 12 noon.

I was kept there about 2 hours and left after signing a paper about self bail and after being told that I would have to appear the next day - Wednesday - at Magistrate Court No. 1.

I wish to make it clear that I was not the only person who had access to ~~the~~ safe in my bedroom. There are 2 keys which can open the safe. One key was kept by senior party members at Freedom House at ^{the} material time; besides me these senior party members had access to the safe. In addition members of my family lived with me.

The safe was cluttered up with files and documents. Many of these files and documents belonged to officials at Freedom House. I never noticed the small box in the safe and I never opened it. I was not aware at or before the visit of the Police to my home that there were bullets or a magazine in the box in the safe. I was not in

possession of the magazine or of any of the bullets.

As a former Chief Minister, Majority Party Leader and Premier of Guyana after winning 3 elections and as a former Opposition Leader, I held a firearms licence and was lawfully entitled to be in possession of bullets.

When the Police asked me back for my revolver last year after the 1973 General Elections, I gave it back to them and, so far as I was aware, I was not in possession of any bullets either in the safe or in any part of the house. If I had any bullets or magazine, I would surely have handed them over to the police.

At some periods during the past 21 years I have had soldiers, policemen and others with rifles and pistols at my residence and offices and at Freedom House. These firearms carried bullets.

I deny that I was in possession of a firearm or ammunition on 30th July, 1974.

Your Worship, you have been given an unenviable job. You have been given the difficult task of trying the wrong person.

It is not I who should be on trial before you. Rather it should be those who have made the decision to revoke my license to keep a firearm, who decided like Hitler's storm troopers to invade my home, who under the guise of looking for firearms read and took away private correspondence, diaries and other material not remotely connected with national security, who use their thugs to break up peaceful meetings, who hire assassins to silence political opponents.

I have been accused for being in possession of a firearm and ammunition.

Your Worship, from this stand I accuse my accusers for denying me the right of possessing a firearm. I ask you to judge the broader issue -- whether as a controversial public figure I should not have the right to possess a firearm. I deem this right not only in the interest of my personal safety, but in a public interest. It is known that I have the honour of leading a party which won three successive general elections under British colonial rule, and which commands the confidence of a majority of the Guyanese people and

would have been in the government had it not been for electoral manipulation and fraud.

It is also known that in this era of intense political struggle, there are some lunatics who believe in assassination as a method. We have seen one University academic-cum-political activist gunned down in broad daylight. Why shouldn't I have the right to hold legally a firearm? That I submit would be in the interest of national security. In the USA, an ex-President is entitled to protection by the US secret service. Why is it that in Guyana, an ex-Premier is deemed an unfit person even to hold a firearm?

Your Worship, you have been asked to try me for violation of a law. I question the right of those who have brought me before you to make such laws, those who violate the most fundamental of our laws, the Constitution itself.

Your Worship, your duty is not only to uphold the law. Above all your duty is to ensure that Justice is done.

Cheddi Jagan Research Centre