

CHEDDI JAGAN (leader of the People's Progressive Party)

Comment, May 27, 1967

writes about how Washington interfered and the Labour leaders changed their minds about

GUYANA

A FOREIGN anthropologist familiar with Guyana in a letter to me said that he welcomed the recent exposure of the CIA plot to overthrow the People's Progressive Party régime. He did so "because several American anthropologists have harped on our 'under-emphasising' the 'hostility' between the Indians and Negroes".

It is understandable why many American anthropologists *over-emphasised* the so-called racial problem. No doubt many who came here were CIA agents and were anxious to present a distorted view of the real struggle in which this country has been engaged particularly for the past two decades.

It should be noted that Professor Ralph L. Beals at the annual anthropologists' meeting last November reported that: "Agents of the intelligence branches of the US Government, particularly the CIA, have posed as anthropologists" and that "Anthropologists . . . have been full or part-time employees of the US intelligence agencies, including the CIA especially, either directly, or through grants from certain foundations with questionable source of income".

Anthropologists are not the only people who distort facts and "manage" news. Congressmen Armistead Seldon and William S. Milliard, two members of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee visited Guyana last November as part of a Latin American study mission. In their recently published Congressional Report they say that "Guyana's ability to pursue development scheme and attract international private and public capital will depend in large measure upon resolution of the racial issue which plagues the country", and that Guyana's political problems stemmed from "the manoeuvres of professed Marxist Cheddi Jagan and his wife".

From this report, one would come to the conclusion that we were the fomenters of racialism and were the stumbling blocks to development and progress. The fact is that racism and



Cheddi Jagan

anti-communism have been the main weapons used by Anglo-American imperialism to "contain" and destroy the Guyana liberation movement.

In 1953, our Constitution was suspended and the PPP government was forcibly expelled from office on the excuse that it was setting up a one-Party, Communist state. Nearly a decade later, at the October 1963 independence conference, Duncan Sandys refused to fix a date for independence and changed our electoral system. He charged that "racialism was the curse to British Guiana today" and attributed blame for the turmoil to "the development of Party politics along racial lines. In the present acute form, this (racialism) can be traced to the split in the country's main political Party in 1955. It was then that the People's Progressive Party, which had previously drawn its support from both the main races, broke into two bitterly opposed political groups, the one predominantly Indian led by Dr. Jagan,

and the other, predominantly Africa, led by Mr. Burnham".

Anglo-US Conspiracy

What Sandys failed to mention was that the Burnham split of 1955 was engineered by the Churchill-led British Government. And it was the same Burnham who was backed by the US Government after our success at the 1961 elections, which after the "Bay of Pigs" fiasco in Cuba resulted in near-hysteria in Washington. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., admits in his book *A Thousand Days* that after a conversation with Burnham in Washington in May 1962, he recommended to the late President Kennedy that the United States should back Burnham and the way to destroy the PPP Government was by the introduction of proportional representation. And Drew Pearson, the American columnist, reported on March 22nd, 1964, that Kennedy made a special trip to London in the summer of 1963 to see Harold Macmillan to persuade him not to grant independence to Guyana. According to Drew Pearson, the 1963 "strike was secretly inspired by a combination of United States CIA money and British Intelligence" and gave "London the excuse it wanted" for withholding independence and changing our electoral system.

The root cause of our present racial and other problems is thus the Anglo-American cold war conspiracy to destroy the PPP. Today, US-dictated trade, fiscal and economic policies obediently carried out by our puppet government, are the main reasons for the present stagnation, dissatisfaction and unrest.

Labour Party leaders, when in opposition, had taken a strong position. Harold Wilson had declared that the decision to change our electoral system was "a fiddled constitutional arrangement". Arthur Bottomley had described the Sandys proportional re-

presentation formula as "riddled with disadvantages . . . quite unknown in any other Commonwealth Colony. . . Those who supported him (Sandys) have done so not because they think that it will reduce racial problems but because they think that it will put some one whom they prefer to 'Dr. Jagan'".

When I saw Anthony Greenwood at his desk at the Colonial Office I put in his hands the "Research Paper on the PNC (Burnham's Party—Editor) Terrorist Organisation" and gave him a separate memorandum on the conspiracy of the CIA, the political opposition and the Guiana TUC. I suggested that the elections fixed for December 7th be deferred, and that the Commonwealth team suggested by Harold Wilson in the House of Commons in June 1964 be set up to work out a solution. Neither Greenwood nor Wilson agreed with my suggestions.

Why Labour changed

This reversal of Labour's stand was clearly due to pressure from Washington. On October 31st, 1964 (the same week I conferred with Greenwood and Wilson) the *New York Times* reported that the British Government "bowing to the US wishes had ruled out early independence for British Guiana" and was going ahead with the PR elections fixed for December 7th. "This development, reported by senior officials tonight" said the newspaper, "came after high level British-American exchanges on how to check the spread of Castroism in the Western Hemisphere. . . Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk examined the situation in their talks in Washington this week. Informants said that Mr. Rusk had left Mr. Gordon Walker in no doubt that the United States would resist a rise of British Guiana as an independent Castro-type state".

CIA pays out

In the 1964 elections, the CIA intervened with money. According to the *New York Times* of April 28th, 1966, the CIA "has poured money into Latin American election campaigns in support of moderate candidates and against leftist leaders such as Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana".

The *Sunday Times* story of April 23rd, stated that the CIA resorted to corrupt means to split my party. It took out an insurance policy for "one ex-Jagan supporter for 30,000 dollars in 1964". This is in line with a number of trade unionists who received money from the American Institute of Free Labour Development, another CIA-

backed organisation, which is today in charge of the Critchlow Institute for trade union education.

Little wonder that Guyana is today a land of bribery, corruption, nepotism "squandermania" and racial discrimination. The main motivation is selfishness and get-rich-quick. Anyone willing to maintain the old order no matter how corrupt can climb to the top.

As regards the economic situation, Guyana is in a state of stagnation and near bankruptcy. The Government cannot meet its day-to-day financial obligations. Teachers' salaries are in some cases two months in arrears. One big foreign company has stopped its credit facilities to the Government. And the big business-dominated Georgetown Chamber of Commerce has, a fortnight ago, asked to see the Prime Minister about the non-payment of accounts long overdue. The Government openly admitted that it owed the commercial banks \$15 million which should have been paid by December 31st, 1966.

Meanwhile, concessions are made to the rich. Our timber, bauxite and oil resources have been turned over to foreign monopolies. Capital taxes introduced by the PPP Government in 1962 were abolished or drastically modified in 1965 but consumer taxes were imposed in 1966 and 1967.

There has been a general decline in the standard of living. The cost-of-living index figure has jumped by 8 points in 1965 and 1966. This leap is in sharp contrast to the 10 points increase in the previous 8-year period, 1956-1964. This year the increase will be staggering when the full impact is realised of the 1967 Government taxes, which aimed at raising twice as much money as the 1966 taxes. Increased rents have also added to the misery caused by rising prices, growing unemployment and under-employment.

While the cost of living continues to rise, wages and salaries for the middle and lower categories either remained stagnant or rose moderately. Sawmill, forest and quarry workers, for instance, received during the PPP regime the same minimum wage as Government unskilled workers. Now the Government has fixed only \$3.50 and \$3.52 per day as compared with \$4.00 for Government workers.

Government's trading policies have also contributed to the worsened position of the people. Pressed by the US Government, the coalition has placed restrictions on cheaper imported goods from the socialist countries. This has

contributed to higher prices. By abandoning trade with Cuba, Guyana has lost a valuable and profitable market for our exports of rice and timber. This has in turn affected the position of rice farmers, loggers, forest and sawmill workers.

Social Service cuts

Faced with budgetary problems, the Government has also slashed social services—education, health, pensions—and reduced spending for crop purchases, crop bonuses and other form of help to farmers. Farmers have suffered a drop in income as a result of the fall in prices of their crops—rice, plantains, milk, coffee, citrus. The fall in incomes has meant less money in the hands of farmers and workers which has affected business turnover, estimated in 1966 to be 30 per cent less than the average for 1964 and 1965.

That the economy is stagnant has been well summed up in the words of a strong Government supporter, businessman John Fernandes, when he recently lamented: "economically we are in a bad way and no one seems to care".

So long as we are tied to Washington with its bankrupt financial and economic policies, our conditions will inevitably worsen. In 1965, there were over 120 strikes; in 1966, the total was 172 and for this year already 57. The puppet Government's answer to the wave of industrial strikes and political unrest is threats and intimidation. It has already passed a National Security Act, under which anyone can be restricted or detained indefinitely without trial. Now it is proposing to enact anti-strike legislation in the form of compulsory arbitration.

The British people are today gravely concerned about the army take-over and destruction of democracy in Greece. Similar concern must be demonstrated for Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Aden, Vietnam and other trouble spots. Developments in these countries are not isolated events. They are all rooted in the Truman Doctrine of "containment" of socialism, communism and national liberation, and the Johnson Doctrine of "intervention".

Meanwhile, US Presidents, Cabinet members and Congressmen glibly talk of freedom, democracy and progress, while CIA anthropologists "discover" racial and tribal differences, and economists "see" population explosions and lack of skills as causes for poverty, illiteracy and disease in "third world" countries.