

REPLIES BY DR. CHEDDI JAGAN TO QUESTIONS PUTBY CARLOS CASTILHO - MANCHETE MAGAZINE

QUESTION 1) What are your views on the conflict between Guyana and Venezuela?

ANSWER Venezuela has no legitimate claim on Guyana's territory. This question was signed, sealed and settled many years ago. Opportunity was given to the Venezuelans to examine all the records in the British foreign office, but no new evidence was forthcoming to reopen the question.

QUESTION 2) In your view what are the true motives behind the Venezuelan ambitions?

ANSWER The true motives behind the Venezuelan aggression and threats of aggression are to thwart the genuine aspirations of the Guyanese people and to keep Guyana as a neo-colonialist US puppet state. The conspiracy entered into by the United States, United Kingdom, Venezuelan and Guyana governments to keep Venezuelan border claim open provides the means of diversion, intimidation and militarization of our politics.

QUESTION 3) How do you feel about the declaration of the Brazilian Government on the dispute?

ANSWER The criticisms of the Venezuelan government levelled by the Brazilian government are welcome. However, we do not see the necessity for the Brazilian government to declare that its interest in Guyana is based on its intention to prevent the "Cubanization" of Guyana. The Guyanese people have a sovereign right to decide on the kind of government they want without interference from any quarter, Brazil or otherwise.

QUESTION 4) Do you think that the dispute with Venezuela is influenced by the coming election in Guyana?

ANSWER Yes. The intention of the recent escalation of the Venezuelan claim is to intimidate the Guyanese people not to vote for the People's Progressive Party. The message the American government wishes to put across through the Venezuelan government is that the Burnham government can maintain peace and security, but that the PPP government will face an attack from Venezuela. The dispute is also used for emotional jingoistic purposes by the Venezuelan government to bolster its winning support.

QUESTION 5) What do you think of the campaign that Prime Minister Burnham is making to register voters abroad?

ANSWER The registration of 66,000 voters abroad is a fraud of the first magnitude. The Burnham government has resorted to this fraud because it cannot win a free and fair election at home. The two coalition parties, which secured only 52% of the votes at the last election can no longer secure a majority of the votes in Guyana because of grave dissatisfaction and discontent among its own supporters. This unprecedented step of registering Guyanese abroad is, therefore, a manipulation of the electoral system for the purpose of maintaining themselves in office.

QUESTION 6) In your view what is the situation political, economic and social in your country? Do you think there is any foundation in the declaration made by Burnham to the American journalist J.W. Wilson of the UPI in May of this year that imply that in case PNC do not win the election there will be a dictatorship in Guyana?

ANSWER Guyana is heading toward bankruptcy and a rightwing Latin-American type dictatorship. The country is heavily indebted and debt charges are assuming an increasingly alarming proportion of the budget. Cost-of-living is soaring, unemployment is increasing and there is growing frustration. This has taken the form of increased emigration, a greater incidence of crime and delinquency, and a record-breaking number of strikes.

Burnham's claim that a dictatorship will be set up in Guyana if the PNC does not win the coming election is utter hypocrisy. Actually, it is his government which is heading Guyana toward a dictatorship. In 1966, his government enacted a National Security Act which denies the right of habeas corpus and trial by jury, judge or magistrate. Under this Act any person can be detained or restricted without trial for an indefinite period of time.

Freedom of movement has been restricted by the denial of passports to travel abroad. The right to peaceful demonstration to protest against the fraudulent system of registration of voters has been denied by the government. Now it is proposing to deny the right to strike by making provision for compulsory arbitration. And the voter registration fraud is a virtual denial of the right to vote.

QUESTION 7) In your view what will be the influence of the unemployment situation in Guyana during the pre-election period?

ANSWER The grave unemployment problem coupled with the high cost of living is likely to result in increasing frustrations and tensions during the pre-election period. The government hopes to squander over \$3 million as a form of national bribery in this pre-election period, but this will not suffice. There will be more and more industrial unrest in the coming months.

QUESTION 8) Many Latin-American governments think that the PPP is a threat to the continental security in terms of OAS. In view of this, do you think there is a possibility of a collective action against your party and yourself?

ANSWER The PPP is no threat to the security of any state in this continent. The real threat is the growing poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease of the Latin American people, and the intervention directly by the USA and indirectly through its Peace Force.

In this respect, the OAS itself, the "ministry of Colonies" of the USA, which aims at maintaining Central and South America as a raw material producer in a dependent deformed economy must be liquidated.

The PPP holds the view that what is needed in Guyana and Latin America is radical change based on a democratic and revolutionary anti-imperialist programme. As regards intervention against my Party, this is a possibility. But the Guyanese people, like the Latin American people have become accustomed to such intervention, and now realize that they must unite and extend the hand of solidarity to each other to defeat imperialist "big stick" methods, whether used directly or indirectly.