

DR. CHEDDI JAGAN INTERVIEWED BY

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QUESTION No. 1

Dr. Jagan, what is your attitude towards terms of independence?

ANSWER

What Guyana is achieving is independence in name only - coat of arms, flag and national anthem. But all else will remain the same. Foreign stranglehold in our economy is being tightened. The U.S. will be able to land military planes here at will. The unresolved Venezuela Border question will be a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. Any future progressive government will be at the mercy of the U.S.-Venezuela axis. And civil and political liberties are threatened under continuous rule by emergency, detention and terror. When the emergency goes, there will be a Preventive Detention Act. There is also a threat of anti-strike legislation hanging over the heads of the workers.

QUESTION No.2

What will be your position vis-a-vis the government?

ANSWER

My party has been and is committed to genuine national liberation for Guyana. This means not only political independence but economic emancipation. We will mark May 26 as another milestone in our march to freedom and progress. But we have no illusions - what is being ushered in on independence date is a neo-colonialist state. Now will begin another chapter of our struggle - our fight against neo-colonialism.

QUESTION No. 3

What is your position regarding foreign investments in Guyana, notably the Canadian ones?

ANSWER

Generally and historically we regard foreign private investments as the root cause of the backwardness of nearly 2/3 of the world, of poverty and misery of hundreds of millions of people and today's tensions. Foreign private investments are like so many Trojan horses which help to undermine national sovereignty and independence and in times of crises to overthrow progressive governments. As with the economic and other relationships of Canada to the U.S.A., the power of decision making is really taken out of the hands of governments and put in the hands of foreign monopolies. These monopolies are politically powerful and financially strong, sometimes even stronger than those countries where they operate but which they do not principally serve. Canadian investments here are principally in bauxite extraction but serve the aluminum complex of industries in North America.

And of course, there is the vital question of drain of capital by foreign investors. In Guyana over the last 17 years, foreign investors brought in nearly \$300 million but made in profits about \$400 million and with assets still worth about \$200 million. Most of the profits have been drained abroad.

A notable example of Canadian investment here was the former Demerara Electric Company. This Company, with an original investment of only \$½ million, made in recent times a net yearly profit after taxes of nearly \$½ million and had to be paid \$7 million when the company was acquired by the PPP government.

We are not happy about this kind of imperialist-satellite relationship between Canada and Guyana. What we want to maintain are trade and other relationships based on mutual respect and recognition of national sovereignty.

QUESTION No. 4

Are you and your policies misunderstood or deliberately misrepresented in the West?

ANSWER

Both. And the reason is obvious. The power elite, the industrial-military complex which dominate the West and subjugate this country also control the mass media of information. And the U.S. invisible government, the CIA, like an octopus also has tentacles in all walks of life - Universities, Trade Unions, Political Parties, Newspapers, Radio and Television. All are geared to the defence of the status quo, which, under the Truman doctrine and now under the Johnson doctrine holds that planned economies and government control of foreign trade are inimical to freedom and democracy. This view we do not share. Naturally, therefore, movements like ours are subverted and our governments destroyed. The weapon of the Big Lie thus has to be used as rationalization and cover for these foul deeds.

QUESTION No. 5

What does Guyana need to give it political, racial and economic stability?

ANSWER

Before prescribing the cure, let me say what is wrong. The reality of our situation is that the present power super-structure does not reflect the wishes at the base. At the December, 1964 rigged elections, 46% of the electorate voted for the PPP; 40% for the People's National Congress (PNC) and 12% for the United Force (UF). In other words, 86% voted for similar stated objectives; namely, genuine nationalism, non-alignment and socialism. But what happened? We were removed from the government and instead of a logical PNC/PPP coalition, there is now the U.S.-imposed PNC/UF coalition pursuing neo-colonialist policies. The result is lack of enthusiasm and apathy. In fiscal and economic matters, U.S.-dictated policies of the government are leading the country to bankruptcy. A growing bureaucracy and repressive machinery on the one hand and increasing debt charges on the other will result in annually recurring budgetary deficits. This will be met by further taxation on the poor as in 1966 and/or a cut in social services like education, health, pensions, etc. What is needed therefore is genuine democracy. All the people must be involved. What is also needed is either a PPP/PNC coalition or an enlightened policy which is in the interest of the people. This means divorce from U.S. dictation, nationalisation of foreign-owned enterprises, rigid price and monetary controls, land reform and a foreign-policy based on non-alignment.

QUESTION No. 6

What is your view about a West Indies Federation?

ANSWER

We have always been in favour, and still are, of a larger grouping of Caribbean territories. But we are not in favour of coming together just for the sake of size. Size alone in geographical and population terms do not bring about development - look at some countries in Asia and Latin America. What is needed above all is a correct strategy of development. This means having an ideological compass and a complete understanding of the roots of economic backwardness. So far as the Caribbean is concerned, the first prerequisite is a posture of genuine non-alignment. Secondly, over-all economic planning with government ownership and control of the commanding heights of the economy and individual territorial specialization.

