

## C.I.A. AND THE TRADE UNIONS IN GUYANA

- by CHEDDI JAGAN

The national liberation movement of the peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, which developed especially after the second world war with an intensity hitherto unknown, became a major revolutionary force on a world scale. Colonial empires came tumbling down one after the other.

The movement for national independence posed a direct threat to the survival of the metropolitan powers. In the first place these were the sources of raw materials, the markets for finished industrial and other goods, and also the sources of super profits and huge dividends.

With the inevitable defeat of colonialism and the inexorable march to nationhood, the imperialist powers began to manoeuvre and to work out a counter-revolutionary strategy.

The Portuguese took the line of obstinacy, and up to today the battle is still raging with gun in hand for the liberation of occupied African territory. The Belgians took the line of sabotage, as in the Congo, to show that without the colonialists there would be chaos. The British and French, though obstinate in Algeria, Guinea and Rhodesia, preferred ceremoniously to grant formal independence and hand over where possible to lackeys who would permit the old colonialist exploitation under the new flag and coat of arms of the "ex-colonial" territory.

All the while, the greatest colonialist and imperialist power, the USA, was only waiting for the colonial flag to be lowered before moving in to set up its foothold and share in the looting and grabbing.

The US policy which took shape even before many countries became independent was clearly to take the place of the departing colonial power and exploit the given country.

The U.S. government although not formally counted among the colonial powers had the largest empire which included all of Latin America (excluding Cuba) the Phillipines, Thailand, South Korea, South Vietnam, Puerto Rico and others. The US was most versed in the art and techniques of neocolonialism.

Since Guyana was geographically and politically, though not culturally, a part of Latin America, the Monroe Doctrine and all the other doctrines propounded by representatives of the US ruling circles right down to Thomas Mann and Lyndon Johnson applied.

Especially since the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959, the Kennedy administration and subsequent ones had refocussed attention penetratingly on the Latin American Continent and had come up with two main strategies: the introduction of reforms and the employment of the "Big Stick". Reforms envisaged under the Alliance for Progress failed miserably to stem the tide of the revolutionary upsurge, but the Johnson strategy of the "Big Stick" was ably executed by marines in Santo Domingo. The U.S. thus made it clear that it was not prepared to allow another progressive government in the Hemisphere.

The movement for independence in Guyana, therefore, had to contend not only with the U.K., already committed in principle to the granting of independence, but also with U.S. imperialism, which was determined to prevent the attainment of independence with a progressive government in office, and ready and willing to go to any lengths to have this determination realized.



This is where the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) comes in. The CIA is actually the institution created, geared and financed for this type of operation.

In this series of articles, we are particularly concerned with the subversion of the Guyanese trade union movement before independence and even now by the C.I.A.; with the manipulation and penetration of the movement to such an extent and in such a manner as to make its leadership and some sections of the workers willing tools of the U.S. government in its grand conspiracy to thwart the realization of genuine independence by the people of Guyana.

It must be remembered that when the CIA came to do its dirty work in Guyana it found the most favourable conditions in a situation created basically by the British.

The trade union movement embraced a considerable number of urban workers who were led by collaborationist elements of the then opposition parties, the People's National Congress (PNC) and the United Force (UF).

The split in the liberation movement in 1954 had adversely affected the trade union movement. Because of the overlapping of political and trade union affiliations, especially in the predominantly Afro-Guyanese urban areas, the unions drew and recruited their leaders from the PNC and UF, but more so from the former party.

But the reactionary alliance of political parties and trade unions failed to win electoral victories in 1957 and 1961, and saw no prospect of winning free and fair elections in the future. It was in this context in 1962 that L.F.S. Burnham, as head of both the PNC and the British Guiana (now Guyana) Labour Union, made a deal with Washington.

This deal was exposed by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in his book, A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House, when he wrote:

"Then in May 1962 Burnham came to Washington .... Burnham's visit left the feeling, as I reported to the President, that 'an independent British Guiana under Burnham (if Burnham will commit himself to a multi-racial policy) would cause us fewer problems than an independent British Guiana under Jagan'. And the way was open to bring it about, because Jagan's parliamentary strength was larger than his popular strength: he had won 57 per cent of the seats on the basis of 42.7 per cent of the vote. An obvious solution, would be to establish a system of proportional representation".

It was thus clear that the method of "constitutionally" removing the PPP from office by changing the traditional first-past-the-post constituency system to proportional representation was decided by the USA. But much had to be done by the U.S. to "establish" that the P.P.P. could not run the country, that the electoral system needed to be changed. It fell to the C.I.A. - inspired trade union leadership to prove with strikes and strife that the "people" no longer supported the PPP government.

In an article in the New York Times (February 23, 1967) headed C.I.A. Linked to Strikes that Helped Oust Jagan, Neil Sheehan exposed the CIA and pointed out that "CIA agents operating under the cover of the American union (The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employee) helped pro-Burnham forces and public employees unions organize strikes against Dr. Jagan during 1962 and 1963".

The Insight Team in an article, How the CIA Got Rid of Jagan, in the London Sunday Times (April 16, 1967) said that the CIA agent, Howard McCabe, provided the bulk of the strike pay, "found the

for distress funds, and the strikes daily 15 minutes on the radio, and their propaganda, and considerable travelling expenses".

The Insight Team continued: "As coups go, it was not expensive: over five years the CIA paid out something over £250,000. For the colony, British Guiana, the result was about 170 dead, untold hundreds wounded, roughly £10 million-worth of damage to the economy and a legacy of racial bitterness".

A week later, the Insight Team, in an article captioned "Macmillan, Sandys backed CIA's anti-Jagan plot", implicated in the conspiracy Harold Macmillan, Duncan Sandys, the two top security men in Britain and "a number of British officials in Guyana".

This Anglo-American conspiracy was exposed in a syndicated article by US Columnist Drew Pearson, who pointed to the fact that John Kennedy had made a special trip to Macmillan to impress upon him the need to stall the granting of independence. CIA activities paid off big dividends. Independence was delayed.

But CIA activities, especially in the trade union field, did not cease after the initial successes of 1962-63. They were stepped up and intensified for even bigger exercises and operations.