

## **Speech by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, Leader of the Opposition, during the debate on the issue of the Venezuelan Decree of the Sea in the Guyana National Assembly on 17 July 1968**

Mr. Speaker,

In moving the motion, the Minister of State, (Shridath Ramphal), entreated the House with the request that we should speak out as a people with one voice. I do not think that there can be any doubt as to the position which we on this side of the House take on this issue. Our stand on this question has been made clear not only in words but in deeds where all may see. Even the Prime Minister in his statement has referred to the effort made by the previous Government to bring an end to this question.

On the resolution we would like to state that we agree that the Venezuelan Decree should be considered a nullity, that the Decree is a threat of aggression, and that the implementation of the Decree should be considered an act of aggression. As I have said before, our position on this question is quite clear. We made the point years ago; we put it in a nut-shell when we said, "Not an inch of territory." The Prime Minister said in the same vein, "Not a blade of grass." But although the words are similar, how different was the treatment! Therefore, when we are called upon to approve the Government "taking all necessary steps to secure the territorial integrity of Guyana" we wonder what is in store, whether it be more words and no action.

You will recall—and this has been put very clearly in the statement by the Prime Minister—that the Government of Venezuela was given every opportunity to look at all the documents. Venezuelan officials went to the Foreign Office; they searched there, but in the end they came out with nothing. What was then our position? We said, "The issue is closed;" to use the Minister's words—the old award was a full and perfect settlement. The matter was closed.

The question is, why was there the need to reopen this issue on the eve of Independence? Can we put all our trust in the Government to take the steps necessary to defend our territory when we see that a conspiracy was entered upon and has led us into this impasse?

Mr. Ramphal regaled us just now with all the events which disclose that Venezuela is a great enemy of Guyana, a great denier of liberties and a trespasser on international law. But, to put the record straight, I should like to inform the Minister and his colleagues that this was not always so. The Prime Minister will recall that at a Conference which we attended together in Venezuela in February 1960, all the Venezuelan parties without exception mentioned not a word about this claim on Guyana's territory.

I led the first official delegation to Venezuela in 1958. I held official discussions with all the Venezuelan parties and they all said individually and jointly that they would not either renounce or resurrect the claim on Guyanese territory.

Not renounce because they felt that this was a political question and no party wanted to put itself in a position where it could be attacked for being unpatriotic, and not renewed because they regarded Guyana then as a friendly country with a friendly Government.

Incidentally, in those days the PPP Government and the Government of Venezuela shared the same aspirations.

At this Conference, to which I referred, the Americans tried unsuccessfully to get a resolution passed which would condemn Cuba, but all the Venezuelan parties, without exception, voted against it and the manoeuvre failed. The whole Conference rejected the American manoeuvre to brand Cuba as an aggressor in this hemisphere and a danger to peace and security.

This brings us up to February 1960.

A few months later at San José, Costa Rica, the American Government got all its puppets in Latin America to agree to a declaration which branded Cuba as an aggressor, or as a nation to be eliminated, and thus the blockade and everything else were mounted. The Foreign Minister of Venezuela, Señor Arcaya, refused to sign this declaration in August 1960 and, because of this, his party, the UDR, came out of the Coalition and from then the Accion Democratica began toeing the American line.

It is important to note this because the Minister tries to point to Venezuela as the enemy; but the Number One enemy is the United States of America. Let us not fool the people of this country by shouting how wicked the Venezuelan people are, because the Venezuelan Government today is the puppet of the Government of the United States of America. Let us put them together so that the Guyanese people know where they stand.

The question of Guyana's independence came up, particularly after the 1961 elections which we won. The 1960 Constitution Conference in London stated clearly that whoever won the elections in 1961 would lead the country to independence. The Americans became hysterical about developments in Cuba and began to tie Guyana with Cuba. To them a planned economy, according to the Truman Doctrine, is a denial of democracy and freedom regardless of whether power was obtained by violence or by constitutional, peaceful means. A planned economy to the Americans is synonymous with a denial of freedom under the Truman Doctrine which is still honoured and still motivates United States policy.

After our victory, it was not the Venezuelans who were concerned primarily about Guyana's leftism; it was the United States of America. And we see how the pressure began to be directed. There was a three-pronged attack against independence of the people of Guyana.

One prong of the attack was pressure on the United Kingdom. President Kennedy made a special trip, in the summer of 1963, to have talks with Macmillan. In an article headed, "How the CIA got rid of Jagan", the London Sunday Times disclosed that Macmillan, Sandys, two top security men in Britain and a number of officials in Guyana backed the CIA plot. That was one prong of the attack.

But lest the pressure should have no results, unrest had to be created at home, because the British Government had been committed, by the 1960 Conference, to grant independence to the victors. So the CIA came here. And now it is also disclosed that Howard Mc Cabe, who posed as a trade unionist, was a

chief CIA agent who not only financed but instigated and kept going the eighty-day strike and blockade in this country.

But the third prong of the attack and the pressure was on the Venezuelan Government. Just in case the pressure failed in London, then the Venezuelans must enter the scene. Thus, the resurrection of this long dormant claim. Thus, the raising of something which, up to February 1960, was dead and buried.

I say this not because I want to resurrect a lot of issues which have passed, but so that the Guyanese people, the Guyanese nation, would recognise the realities and not be led astray by the legalism, the legalities. We must deal with the realities.

The Minister of State wants us to be diverted into channels of international law, of legalism—who is breaking what international law and so on—but clearly he knows that behind all this legalism, since the days of the Munroe Doctrine, there has been piracy in these parts by the United States Government and open intervention in the affairs of sovereign nations. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister now sees the necessity for the US intervention in the Dominican Republic. No doubt, he will be persuaded by the Americans to see the necessity for the Venezuelan intervention into Guyana!

This is no prattle about law. This is time to recognise the realities of international politics where force and big stick are the key factors operating in this Hemisphere. Mere talk is not going to get us anywhere.

To come back to this conspiracy. . . The United States, the United Kingdom and Venezuela were involved. We must not, of course, leave out our friends in the Government for, according to Schlesinger in his book, *A Thousand Days*, in May 1962 Mr. Burnham visited Washington and there the deal was consummated. Mr. Schlesinger advised President Kennedy that Mr. Burnham and not Jagan must be backed in Guyana. So we have today what started as a plot becoming a Frankenstein monster which has got out of control.

Why was it necessary for the Government to sign the Geneva Agreement? Why did the British Government which, in our time, said that the matter was closed, agreed to the re-opening of the question at Geneva? Was it not to allow the Venezuelans to keep this question going, to be examined by a Mixed Commission until perhaps another election comes along which the PPP might win, fraud or no fraud?

Fortunately, the records come out very quickly nowadays, not like in the “good old days” of the British when they kept them buried for a hundred years. The experts write memoirs the next day they are out of their seats. I should like to read a section of the *Guyana Graphic* to show how people are seeing the affairs of Guyana—this conspiracy which was plotted years ago. I quote from Page 1:

The sources said Washington was evidently interested in avoiding problems to Guyanese Prime Minister Forbes Burnham who will once again be called to test his popularity in forthcoming general elections.

The Dutch, the Suriname and the Venezuelan Governments were asked to “ease demands against the Guyanese Government at least for some time”, the sources said.

As far as Washington was concerned, there were only two tactical approaches to the internal Guyanese problem in order to facilitate Burnham's second consecutive victory.

The first was that countries with border claims against Guyana—Venezuela and Suriname—create as few problems as possible to the Burnham administration.

The second was for Venezuela to contribute its pressure, making sure the Guyanese realise the danger they would incur if leftist leader Cheddi Jagan triumphed in the elections.

In the latter case, Guyana would be the only communist regime in South America.

Now we see why Britain signed the Geneva Agreement.

Now we see why our Government, despite advice to the contrary from the Opposition, signed the Geneva Agreement. What more was there to examine?

Quite clearly this is what should have been done at the time of Independence. When transfer of power took place, the territory's geographical boundaries which comprise Guyana should have been lodged with the United Nations. This is what should have been done by Britain. But now it would seem that our boundaries are still in a fluid state and the Venezuelans are interpreting this fluidity as they choose by occupying Ankoko and now moving into our territorial waters.

Now we are told that this country is in a grave predicament. A small nation, with no navy, no air force, no battle-ship, beset by a bully. We want to ask why is it that the bully has now raised up the question. Perhaps, the Prime Minister will tell us when he speaks about his talks with Leoni soon after he assumed power there. What understanding did Leoni give? How did he view the question, and so on, so that we can know more about these discussions. Unfortunately, there are too many things secret in this country, like the deal with Reynolds Metals Company and others which we never know about.

In my view, the Venezuelans have raised this question at this particular time for two reasons:

Number One. . . jingoistic reasons, so as to whip up internal fervour in Venezuela in support of the Government. The governing party today is in complete disarray. In 1958, Accion Democratica won 47 percent of the votes. Because in 1960 it toed the American line, the URD came out of the coalition. A section of its party broke away and called itself the Movement of the Left. At the last election, the support of the leading party dropped from 47 percent to 33 percent. Now the Chairman of the party has come out of the party and is leading a new party which is threatening the Government and which is likely to win the forthcoming election. And so, Leoni and company, who now have very little support among the masses of the people, are using this issue to generate hostility to Guyana and also to generate support for themselves.

The other reason is clearly intimidatory—to intimidate the Guyanese people that they must not get rid of the puppets here. This is the other reason. That is why it is raised at this time. It is clear that we have landed ourselves in a big boat. Unfortunately, the boat is not big enough.

Carl Blackman, in an editorial, asked, "Where are our friends?" He not only asked where are our friends; he also said that someday we will have friends with rockets willing to use them. I did not know people believed me when I said long ago that we have friends with rockets. Maybe we need them now.

What about the British? They have Colonel Pope, the muscle of the British Government and the Army, but what of the British support for us? The Prime Minister in his statement said that Britain has a responsibility to Guyana. By what standard of international morality has the Prime Minister come to this conclusion? Has he noted the failure of the British Government to honour international commitments? Take Rhodesia, take the question of immigration from East Africa, take the question of Vietnam and other international questions whether legal or moral— has the British Government taken a stand in favour of justice and humanity?

The plain fact of the matter is that Britain is a country moving by self-interest only, and her self-interest today with a balance of payment crisis and other crises indicates that the Queen must visit Latin America so that they can do more trade there. In this contest, Guyana versus Venezuela, it is clear where the British will stand and it is clear, considering the orders which Britain took from the United States on the question of our independence, that Britain will always consult the United States of America before she makes any move on the question of Guyana.

What about our friends, the United States? We saw Uncle Johnson and Uncle Odo riding horses together. Now is the time to call on our friends. Yesterday, in the Evening Post, we read a story dated "Caracas, Venezuela (Associated Press)", that Maurice Bernbaum, US Ambassador to Caracas, said the United States will assume a posture of strict neutrality in the border dispute between Venezuela and Guyana. Why is it that the United States all of a sudden—our great "protector", this nation that has put this Government in office, the nation that sponsors this Government, that helps it, that aids it—in this zero hour says it will be neutral?

The United States has indicated that she, from the time of the Munroe Doctrine, will be boss of this area. She has assured all the nations which constitute the Organisation of American States (OAS) that questions of self-determination, questions of territorial integrity, etc., will be solved in a peaceful manner through the OAS. Why then have not the Americans invoked OAS? Why have they not referred this question to the OAS and come out openly? Is there any doubt that this is an aggression? I am sure that the Prime Minister and the Minister of State could not have failed to urge the Ambassador who is here that this is an aggression. They have done this convincingly so to this House and to the nation.

Are the Americans so illogical that they cannot sense logic from two brilliant lawyers, two Queen's Counsels of Guyana? No, it is not that they are deprived of the sense of logic; it is a question of self-interest. The United States of America has in Venezuela a big share of self-interest. Approximately 60 percent of its Latin American investments are in Venezuela in oil, ore, steel, etc. And, therefore, the United States does not want to take sides lest anti-American feelings should develop in Venezuela. In August 1960 the Vice-President of the United States, Richard Nixon, visited Venezuela and he was mocked, mobbed and spat upon by the people. This represented the feeling of the Venezuelan people until the Betancourt regime betrayed them. The Americans do not want a similar feeling to develop again in Venezuela; nor do they want anti-Americanism to develop here more than it is.

We would like to qualify these words. There are two types of Americans. . . the Americans like Stokley Carmichael and Dr. Spock, the famous child expert who is celebrated all over the world. Of course, all mothers know him. The United States has just sentenced him to three years' imprisonment for mobilising the young people to oppose the draft and go and die in Vietnam.

When we speak of anti-Americanism we do not speak of that kind of American. We speak of Johnson, and all the others, who from the days of Truman serve big business in America. Clearly, these people do not want the PPP and its supporters to be opposed to them; nor do they want the supporters of the supporters of the UF and the Government to take up an anti-American position.

This is why the Americans decide to stand aloof on this issue. To whom are we to turn? America has taken upon itself the mantle of guardian of this hemisphere. Of course, the guardian of imperialist interests! America supplies to all its puppets in these countries military arms and weapons so that they can maintain themselves in power. The United States of America helped them with military aid between the years 1952 to 1962 amounting to US\$800 million. The puppet regime of Venezuela also was helped—some of it is now coming to patrol our territorial waters. These are our friends!

There is the question of Ankoko. Even if we assume that they blundered in the Geneva Agreement, that the talks were getting nowhere, what did they do when the Venezuelans invaded and occupied Ankoko? This was a clear case of aggression. By that act they virtually nullified the Agreement. It is no use telling us now that the Decree is a nullity. Venezuela breached the Agreement which was blundered into then. What did the Government do? In other cases we have seen when there was an attempted aggression in 1950, when it was alleged—I say alleged, but it was not even proved—that North Korea invaded the South, the United Nations Security Council instigated by the USA passed a resolution, in the absence of the USSR, sending United Nations forces made up of US troops to deter the aggression. Why did we not go to the Security Council? That is what we are there for. Do we have our illustrious Mr. Braithwaite and now Mr. Carter as window pieces there? This is the time when the matter should have been brought up immediately. But before this Government can take the matter to the Security Council it has to go through a certain set of reasoning; who will support it and who will not.

Where will the communist bloc be? Where will the Afro-Asian bloc be? How will it be split—the Latin American group. Where will the United States and England be? It is clear from what we see now, the neutrality of the United States and the virtual toeing of the US line by Britain, that these countries would not have liked the question to go to the United Nations. Perhaps the Prime Minister will tell this House why. I would have preferred the Minister of State, instead of regaling this House with what everybody knows, to tell us what concrete steps have been taken — what they have done. Has the Government spoken to the Americans? (Interruptions) The United States Ambassador, Mr. Delmar Carlson, made a statement in the Guyana Graphic. It states: "Last night the US Ambassador, Mr. Delmar Carlson, said that in regard the Venezuelan Government Decree of July 9, "it is a question of International Law and we have made clear to the Government of Venezuela the US position on that matter."

Has the American Government told the Prime Minister what they will do? Should the matter be taken to the United Nations what will be their stand? Have they urged or advised that the matter should be taken to the UN? We would like to know this, because we know that nothing in this country is done without the consultation of the Ambassador.

Let us know what is the position, because mere talk is not going to get us anywhere; mere arguing about international law is not going to get us anywhere either. While they quibble, as they say, Rome burns. The Venezuelan fleet will be taking over the shores. Clearly, we are naked. As Mr. Blackman said in one of his Sunday editorials, we have no friends. We have no friends because of the bankrupt policy that our Government has embarked upon since Independence.

Who are our friends? Chiang Kai-Shek, Pak? The ex-Minister of Economic Development made a trip to Taiwan. Doctors have come from South Korea and we understand from the press that it has been agreed that the South Koreans will establish an Embassy here. We have recognised the status of another puppet regime, which cannot stand on its own feet without US bayonets.

Who are our friends? On Independence, when the puppet Chinese Government was invited here, People's China was not invited. The Russians who were here requested of the Government that the two countries should establish diplomatic relations. Nothing has been done. We are establishing diplomatic relations with South Korea. Clearly, if the Russians were here, the Prime Minister could have called them in and said, "How about it? Where do you stand?"

The Evening Post, one of the apologists of the Government, suggested that the friends of the Government had better do something otherwise the Government may be forced to turn to some other quarter. It says in this editorial of July 14:

The reaction of Britain and America to this latest threat from Venezuela remains to be seen. But both countries must be reminded that if pushed too far, the Government of Guyana may feel called upon to seek assistance wherever it can be found.

How? Not by this Government. This Government is too committed; its hands are in the pockets of Uncle Sam and Uncle Sam has handcuffs there.

We should like to join in the Motion. I repeat: We are patriots. We will fight to the last man; we will fight not only like the Vietnamese people, but we will fight with friends. We must get international friends. Why is it the Vietnamese are ripping hell out of the Americans? Because they have friends with rockets who have given them military equipment, and because they have friends who are demonstrating on their behalf in America and all over the world. What friends do we have? Where? Nowhere, lest it affronts the United States of America who does not want to be put on the spot to take sides.

So, while we give every support to the Government and unite against the territorial aggression, we want to put the blame squarely where it really lies, not only on the Venezuelan Government but on the American Government and on this Government for joining in the conspiracy, for signing the Geneva Agreement, for failing to lodge, in conjunction with the British, at the United Nations, the boundaries of Guyana at the time of Independence, for failure to negotiate a treaty of guarantee of our territorial integrity with the Great Powers, East and West.

Any politician would have known that this was a threat to our sovereignty. Perhaps, it is a wrong conclusion—not any politician would have known, because the politicians over there were part of the conspiracy and therefore they could not sign such a treaty. Austria was able to sign a treaty recently with the East and the West. Russia, France, Britain, America guaranteed her territorial integrity.

When we were in the Government we said that even if it may appear that we were surrendering part of our sovereignty, we are prepared to sign such a treaty with the Great Powers, who will not only see that Guyana remains neutral, but who will guarantee our territorial integrity. Perhaps, it would have been a surrender of a bit of sovereignty in that we were saying they would supervise our neutrality. They (the PNC) did not like this; but then we were facing reality knowing the predatory nature, not of Venezuela, but of the United States sitting behind Venezuela, who will want to use Venezuela to jump on our shoulders. And so, such a treaty was necessary. Let the Government tell us whether they tried. Or is it because the United States was not only its protector but the country which brought it to power that there could be no question of having any country from the East guaranteeing our territorial integrity.

That is why, no doubt, we have not had the request of the Soviet Union for diplomatic representation in this country granted. I have already referred to the failure of the Government to take to the Security Council the Venezuelan occupation of Ankoko. We would like to hear from the Government what it proposes to do now. All we are hearing of so far is about circulating documents and seeing the Latin American group.

Is that all we are going to do now? Perhaps the Minister who will speak next will tell us why we have not yet gone to the Security Council and whether we intend to go on this question now.

Early this year when the budget crisis was on we saw the Surinamese beating the war drums. Now that the civil servants and Government workers are talking about going on strike, the Venezuelans are beating their war drums. This headline appeared in the Evening Post: "Because of Border Issue Hold Over Interim pay Claim—GEU Urges FUGE". So that now we have another border crisis, some people will have an excuse to say, "Let us all unite. Let us sink our differences. Let us not have any strike. Let us have no wage demands;" and, no doubt, sooner or later, we will hear, "Let us have no elections."

As I have already pointed out, the Venezuelan aggression is an act of intimidation. Another point which must not be forgotten is that it is creating the atmosphere in Guyana for the militarization of our politics. Why do I say this? We hear that the Prime Minister is going to the USA. No doubt, he will include in his itinerary a visit to Mr. Johnson or Mr. Ball at the United Nations, or some other United States representative. "Restrain your boys over there," but not only that. . . "Look, they have warships, aeroplanes, military planes; we do not have any. Will you please give us some?"

I warn against taking this road. Militarization of the politics of Latin America has been one of the reasons why the people are so poverty-stricken today, why Latin America is on the brink of revolution. Over two thousand million dollars is spent by the Governments of these poor starving countries for military purposes. Militarization has become necessary because the puppets who are in office can no longer win free and fair elections. They have to resort to fraud, as we are seeing here already.

The next step is a military coup. Aside from the danger to democracy which these military regimes pose, it means further impoverishment of the people for more money has to be found in the budget to keep the military regime going. I understand that last week we had to vote thousands of dollars for the Peace Corps. This is another part of the military apparatus.



To conclude, I wish to say that the time has come for action, not just talk; and we want to assure this House and the nation that the PPP will be backing whatever action is taken one hundred percent as long as it is in the interest of the nation. We, therefore, suggest that the Government should not only talk but embark on some of the following steps:

Number One: Scrap the Geneva Agreement and break off the Mixed Commission discussions. The Venezuelans have already broken off the Sub-Commission of the Mixed Commission. Here again we do not understand the Government. Some time ago, as was disclosed in the Guyana Graphic of the 25th May, 1967 the Prime Minister said that he was opposed to any joint development of this disputed territory—so-called disputed—but yet later on we saw that a Mixed Commission was appointed. We saw where the Venezuelans have walked out and made a fool, a football, of this Government and we seem to be impotent and helpless. Therefore, let us dispense with all these frivolities and waste of time and taxpayers' money. Scrap the Geneva Agreement and break off the Mixed Commission discussions.

Number Two: Sever diplomatic relations with Venezuela. We saw where on the question of Rhodesia, several African states like Tanzania and Malawi broke off diplomatic relations with Britain. They were not directly involved, but they did it as a matter of solidarity. Here our territory has been occupied, other incursions are taking place, and we are still having cocktail parties with these people and sending them goodwill messages and all kinds of nonsense. The time has come to act. Sever diplomatic relations.

Number Three: Refuse radio time to the Venezuelans. The Opposition here does not have time on the radio, but the Venezuelans have time to brainwash the people of this country. We must not only deny them radio time, but also restrict them in their activities in other places. Let them go home.

I have already said that the question should be taken to the Security Council, if necessary to the Hague Court. I know that these things may not bring us the result that we want, but you are using international forum to expose not only the Venezuelans but also the United States which is backing the Venezuelans and which has started this whole thing. We have friends in the West Indies. Trinidad and Barbados are in the OAS. Again I do not regard the OAS as an instrument of progress, but ask your friends in Trinidad and Barbados to raise the matter in the OAS. Let us see if they have some courage.

Next, the Opposition must be involved in all future negotiations. If the Opposition had been truly involved from the very beginning, I am sure that we would not have been in this predicament today. I understand that when the Venezuelans were at Geneva they had the Opposition and all kinds of institutions there so as to have a national consensus. Why are you afraid to carry us? You do not have to act on our advice, but at least you would know what half of the people of Guyana think.

I would also suggest that, at this time of crisis, it seems improper for the Prime Minister to depart for the USA. Who will make all these decisions on important questions of the day? Surely, it will be beneath the dignity of the Prime Minister to go knocking about at the United Nations trying to lobby people.

If the matter was going to the United Nations Security Council, yes, we would welcome our Prime Minister speaking there, standing up for the integrity of our country, but at this time I urge the Prime Minister not to leave Guyana.

I urge the Government to depart from the path it has so far pursued. What is needed in Guyana today is the adoption of new domestic and foreign policies. Domestic policies today are leading the country from one crisis to another; even cassava is being sold at 16 and 18 cents a pound. This is the extent of the crisis—the cost of living is mounting. This is not the time to think of partisan interests. Now is the time to think of the nation. And so in order that new policies can be pursued in this country, domestic and foreign, we call on the Government to resign and to form a broad national government of anti-imperialist unity. I repeat, of anti-imperialist unity, for this can be the only basis of any Government and people which can be strong.

We must not only talk that we must sink our differences. What is the use talking that we are threatened and that we must all come together. It is wishful thinking. It is like some of the churches telling the people: Love thy neighbour and everything will come right. It is not coming right; it is getting worse. Mere pleadings are not enough. The time has come, as I said, for action and we recommend to the Government the steps which should be taken. As a start, I am sure that if there is genuine consultation and the Opposition is brought into the confidence of the Government, then perhaps more fruitful avenues could be explored so that Guyana is taken out of this difficulty not only for now, but for ever.

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