

STRAIGHT TALK

by Cheddi Jagan.

CONVERSATIONS WITH ALLENDE

On five occasions we talked - at the Inter-American Conference for Democracy and Freedom in Venezuela in April 1960; in Chile in 1961; in Havana, Cuba in 1966 at the Tri-Continental Conference; in Moscow in 1969 and again in Chile in October 1972.

Always it was the same theme - how to get and hold political power for the benefit of the masses.

In 1958, he lost the Presidential elections by about 40,000 votes. That was about the total number won by a left-winger who had rattled and broken away from the alliance he led.

At Maracaibo, Venezuela, ~~where~~ ^{where} SOLIDARITY we successfully battled against an American manoeuvre to isolate Cuba, he talked about the need for a hemispheric organization. Solidarity, he pointed out, was absolutely essential. Imperialism was capable of overtly and covertly operating everywhere. Similarly, the people forces in every country must also be able to lend support to each other.

This viewpoint took form later in the Tri-continental Organization (OSPAAL) in 1966, and the Latin American Solidarity Organisation (OLAS) in 1967.

In our conversation a day before I left Chile in October 1972, Allende and a couple of his closest aides were keenly interested in my account of the US and CIA involvement in our affairs, the extensive propaganda campaign, the fomenting and financing of strikes and riots.

Interest was keen because there were so many similarities between Guyana and Chile.

Guyana under the PPP, said the witch-hunters, was going to be a second Cuba in the Western hemisphere. So it was said would Chile be under Marxist Allende.

CRUSADE

The Christian Anti-Communist Crusade admitted spending US\$45,000 during the 1961 election campaign to defeat the PPP. International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) and others spent millions to defeat the Unidad Popular. According to the influential Washington Post, the CIA alone threw in about \$20 million to help Allende's opponent, Eduardo Frei, during the 1970 elections.

What evinced the greatest interest was the subversive activities of the CIA in fomenting the 80-day strike, how the CIA agent Howard McCabe operated through the Public Service International and NUPSE, how CIA funds were channelled through the Gotham Foundation to pay the workers during the strike, how local trade union leaders had been trained in subversion in Washington by the CIA and the Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), how big business closed their doors and paid their workers to go out and demonstrate in the streets. Allende asked me to send all the available literature we had. He instructed that publicity should be given to the CIA activities in Guyana as a warning

to Chileans.

VIOLENCE

At one point, Allende asked in the light of our experience for my observations on the situation in Chile. ~~based on our experience.~~

The reactionary forces, I said, would not immediately resort to a military coup. They would bide their time, hoping to defeat the Unidad Popular on the electoral front, that imperialist economic aggression (drop in price of copper, freeze on foreign credits, higher prices for imports, etc.) coupled with local reactionary strife (demonstrations and strikes) and sabotage would result in hardships for the working people; that inflation, shortages and high prices will lead to dissatisfaction and loss of electoral support.

The danger point would be the March 1973 elections, *I pointed out.*

If the Unidad Popular ~~gained~~ support, then the right-wing forces, frustrated through their failure to get their anticipated majority to enable them to impeach the President, would argue that with the passage of time, the electoral position of Allende would be strengthened, ~~and~~ *they* therefore would see violence as their only hope. The danger of an army coup would then be great.

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ARMY

As regards the army, I said that its tradition of non-intervention in politics cannot be relied upon completely. In Brazil, it had been said that there was a democratic-progressive base in the army, particularly at the sergeant's level. But the army overthrew the reformist Goulart government in 1964.

And while it is true that there are progressive tendencies in the army, as in Peru and Panama, one must remember that the contending forces fought bitterly in the Bolivian army, leading to the overthrow of the anti-imperialist General Juan Jose Torres by the present right-wing General Hugo Banzer.

In Chile itself, General Rene Schneider was kidnapped and murdered by top rightist military conspirators as part of a co-ordinated putsch to prevent Allende's inauguration and to "save the country from communism."

C.I.A.

Events developed almost the way I predicted. At the March 1973 elections, Allende's Unidad Popular increased its voting strength from 36 per cent in 1970 to 43 per cent.

The reactionaries then decided on creating chaos to prepare the way for the army intervention. The lorry owners' two-month strike, like the 80-day strike in Guyana in 1963, coupled with strikes of other middle-strata groups - doctors, airline pilots, etc. - had a crippling effect.

As in Guyana, the C.I.A. played the role as financier of chaos. Time (September 24, 1973) wrote that its correspondent Rudolph Ranch "visited a group of truckers camped near Santiago who were enjoying a lavish communal meal of steak, vegetables, wine and empanadas (meat pies) 'Where does the money for that come from?' he enquired. 'From the CIA' the truckers answered laughingly."

In Guyana, the British army and the British-commanded police sat tight while the opportunist, pro-imperialist politicians and labour leaders created strife and disorder, which was then used by the British government to renege on its 1960 pledge to grant independence.

In Chile, the right-wing military brass, after pushing aside the head of the armed forces, General Carlos Prats Gonzalez, seized power in one of the most brutal military coups.

SOCIALISM

With Allende's downfall, the big question now posed is: "Is there a peaceful electoral road to socialism?" Many will now be saying: "I told you so; that road is impossible."

However, this question must be viewed dialectically and not dogmatically. While it is true that for Latin America the strategic political road to socialism will be largely through armed struggle, the electoral road cannot be ruled out everywhere. Much depends on the national and international balance of forces, and the concrete conditions.

The basic weakness of Allende's Unidad Popular government was that it had the legal, but not the political, capacity to bring about socialism. With only 36 per cent (1970) to 43 per cent (1973) of electoral support, it did not have enough popular political support to deter the army.

REVOLUTION

The latter created difficulties for Allende. Seeing no difference between a national-democratic, anti-imperialist revolution and a socialist revolution, they forced a too-rapid internal domestic programme.

The opposition Christian Democratic Party, it should be remembered, supported the nationalisation of the foreign companies, but refused to go along with some of the domestic measures the government pursued. They fought inside and outside of Parliament (National Congress) to embarrass the government and ultimately to prepare the way for the army coup.

In Chile, as elsewhere, ideological work among the masses, including the armed forces, is a pre-requisite to success. Only in this way will the people be prepared to bear short-term difficulties due to economic aggression, and at the same time will the government be able to combat the rightist conspirators in the army.