

by Cheddi Jagan

The Army - a new stage in Guyana's Politics
BIGGEST SCANDAL OF ALL TIMES

The July 16 general election will go down as the biggest scandal of all times. Never before in Guyanese history has such an outrageous fraud been perpetrated on the Guyanese people.

This sordid affair has, however, served its purpose.

Firstly, it has proved that the tactical line of the PPP was correct.

Some criticized us for contesting the elections. Had we followed their advice and boycotted the elections, the PNC would have gained several advantages -- it would have told the world that the boycott was an indication of our weakness; it would have taken most of the seats; and the United Force (UF) would have been given more than its present one seat to be the main opposition in the parliamentary farce; other splinter groups would have been encouraged and given a few seats to constitute with the U.F. the parliamentary opposition.

By contesting the CONSCIOUSNESS

By contesting the elections and not entering parliament, we have achieved the same objective as a boycott of the elections.

The National Assembly has been reduced to a hollow mockery. And the opportunism of the U.F. has been laid bare.

The electoral struggle has had, however, far greater significance for the politics of the country.

Firstly, it has brought Guyana to a new stage of political struggle. The rank-and-file members and supporters of the PPP now fully understand, as a result of personal experience with 3 general elections and one local government election, that it is not possible to remove the PNC from government so long as it controls the electoral machinery and the state apparatus & the civil service, the judiciary and the army.

PPP GAINS

Secondly, the PPP has gained in strength while the PNC is losing support. Our support was clearly demonstrated by the huge crowds at public meetings before and after the elections. By comparison,

the PNC meetings were quite small.

And there was a marked difference in voter turnout. In PPP strongholds, the average turnout was around 90 per cent; in Greater Georgetown, the PNC stronghold, the figure was around 70 per cent.

The PNC support also dropped in Georgetown from about 60 per cent of the electorate in 1968 to 46 per cent in 1973.

In another PNC stronghold, Bartica, at the Secondary School polling division, out of 730 voters, there turned out to vote only 375, of which 116 were proxies; at the Community Centre, only 357 out of 567 voted. At Winiperu, 750 were registered, but only 435 voted.

The PPP has gained support even in areas where it was not traditionally strong.

In Greater Georgetown, the official returns show that the PPP maintained its support. But that does not tell the full tale. Its support would have been greater had it not been for ^{PNC} intimidation -- "if the PPP wins, there will be trouble" -- postal voting and other irregularities. Many of our supporters could not exercise their vote others had voted for them. And thousands of unregistered PNC supporters were permitted to vote after 4 p.m., either for themselves or for others who refused to turn out to vote PNC.

ARMY

Thirdly, the electoral ~~stronghold~~ ^{struggle} has ushered in a new force in politics - the army. In 1964, the PNC-UF coalition came to office through Anglo-American imperialist backing and a change of the voting system from the first-past-the-post constituency system to the list system of proportional representation. In 1968, the PNC "won" by fraud. In 1973, the PNC, conscious that the electorate was willing to fight against fraud, used the army to shoot and kill, and to rifle the ballot boxes.

Lacking popular support, the PNC is now a prisoner not only of the imperialists, but also of the army. Each will now exert political influence.

HARDSHIPS

The result for Guyana will be disastrous. Policies will be more and more oriented in an anti-working class, pro-imperialist direction.

Greater army influence will mean a policy of bribery towards the political and bureaucratic elite in the civil service, judiciary, police and army.

And towards the political opposition and the discontented rank-and-file, there will be a policy of coercion. Already police harassment and arrest of political opponents is the order of the day.

Apart from being coerced, the Guyanese working people will experience falling living standards, Inflation and dear money from the capitalist states, coupled with national bribery, will result in additional taxation, higher prices and further decline in social services. And a vicious circle will develop a tendency towards fascism.

DEFENSE

To defend living standards and to fight against fascist tendencies it ^{is} necessary to develop the broadest national unity at the political level, and to strengthen all mass organizations ~~the~~ trade unions, farmers intellectuals, youths, women, cultural, religions, etc.

~~At the same time, it is necessary to build a self-defense groups for defense against PNC thugs, and a defense fund to provide legal aid and assistance to persons and families who come under attack.~~

There must be the broadest mobilisation of the masses in the PPP's campaign of civil resistance and non-cooperation.

There must be united struggle to bring down the minority, racist, neo-fascist PNC regime.