

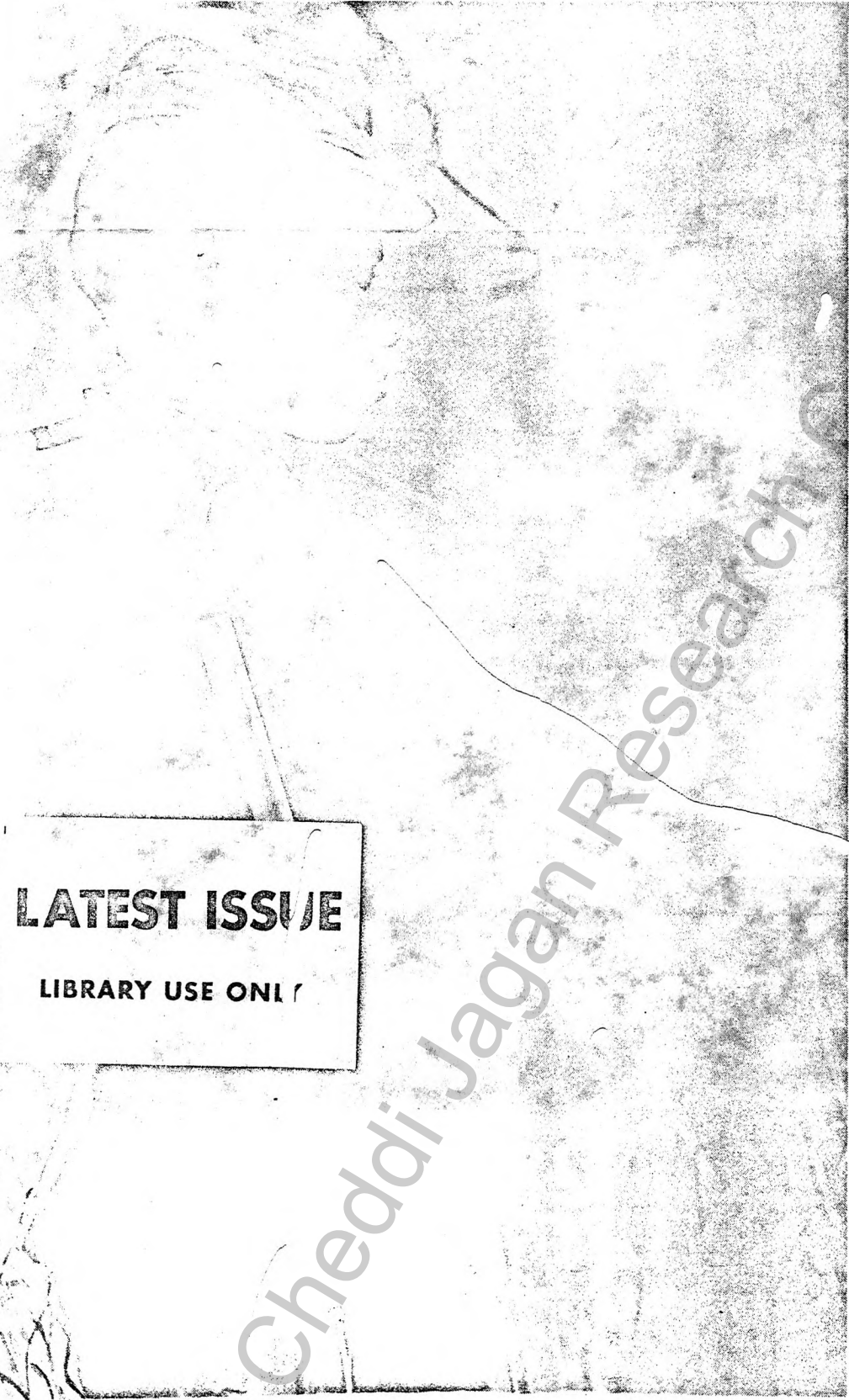
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CHEDDI JAGAN: GUYANA, CUBA, THE CARIBBEAN



CHEDDI JAGAN, Marxist leader of the Guyanan opposition.

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., May 15—Dr. Cheddi Jagan, leader of the People's Progressive Party of Guyana, was interviewed by TNS on a recent one-day visit to New York.

The PPP is the second largest party in Guyana and leads the opposition to the government of Forbes Burnham.

Guyana, one of the largest countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, achieved complete independence from Great Britain in 1970. Recently, the Burnham government established diplomatic relations with Cuba.

We're very interested in how the People's Progressive Party (PPP) views the new relations between Guyana and Cuba, and how this will effect the PPP.

First of all we have been constantly, continuously I should say, agitating for Guyana to improve its relations with Cuba, since the time they broke off all contacts in 1965. We issued a statement at the time [of the re-establishment of relations] welcoming it, but we also speculated why it happened.

We think it was done for several reasons: 1) for Burnham to improve his own image, because his image is sinking, as a puppet of imperialism, to improve his image by associating, by going in the same plane with Fidel, by normalizing relations and so on. 2) This may have been done, as in the case with China, after consultation and even approval by the United States.

ECONOMIC REASONS FOR RECOGNITION

In this period of intense competition for markets in the capitalist world, Cuba... first of all we have CARIFTA*, which was a means of internal

*CARIFTA: Caribbean Free Trade Association, formed in May, 1968. A major purpose is to end tariffs in the Caribbean. Members: Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, St. Lucia, Montserrat, Trinidad-Tobago and St. Vincent.

contradiction within capitalism, enabling the multinationals from the U.S. to move in and move out the British. It used to be a British preserve. As you know the British goods entering paid half the duty as goods coming from the U.S. Well, with CARICOM and CARIFTA the raw materials go in duty-free and the factories go in duty-free and the buildings go in duty-free, and they repackage, they set up these little assembly plants, and they repackage. Now, American goods are displacing British goods. So that was the first thing.

The second thing is, having set up industries in the Caribbean, no longer just buying from the outside, foreign capitalists tied up with local capitalists, they need markets outside of the region: This is the general problem of capitalism. Cuba, therefore, looms large, because Cuba is the largest territory in the Caribbean. So, for economic reasons, the Caribbean wants to normalize relations with Cuba.

Could you answer for a moment CARICOM—what you think of it, what is wrong?

This is one of the subjects that I dealt with, at a lecture I gave at Trinidad University of the West Indies, under the auspices of the Guyana-Trinidad-Cuba Friendship Association. They asked me to talk on the topic "Cuba and the Commonwealth Caribbean."

I compared CARICOM and CARIFTA with CMEA*—Cuba with the socialist world—and showed the relation that Cuba has with CMEA.

Cuba's economic planning is on a different model from what is happening in the Caribbean. In the Caribbean we first had the Puerto Rican model in the 50s. The Puerto Rican model is a failure; now the Caribbean is going in for the model based on ECLA,

**CMEA: Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. An international economic organization of the socialist camp, formed in 1949. Members: Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, Cuba (joined 1972), Mongolia, Poland, Romania, USSR, Czechoslovakia.

the Economic Commission for Latin America, and the Alliance for Progress, which was tried out by Frei** and didn't work. Then I showed how in Chile, the battle was fought out with Allende losing elections in '58 to Alessandri who was carrying out a model similar to the Puerto Rican model, based on incentives to foreign capital; that the Frei model was reformist, based on the ECLA model and the Alliance for Progress, on partnership between foreign and local capital, the so-called joint enterprises. Then I showed that the model is now being used in the Caribbean, and it has failed in the Caribbean as it failed in Chile, and it was that failure in Chile that led to the victory of Allende, after he had lost on two previous occasions.

IDEOLOGICAL PROGRESS

So I said that our line, the world communist revolutionary line, is that there are three revolutionary streams, uniting as far as possible; that is, the world socialist movement, the national liberation movement and the progressive forces in the advanced capitalist world. Anything that hinders this only serves to stop the liberation process and stop the march to socialism.

Then I referred to Viet Nam and showed how for Viet Nam to win power it is necessary to have material aid from the socialist world and world public opinion backing, including support from whites, because they talk a lot about Black Power in the Caribbean. Including white people and I referred to Australia and Sweden, and the help they gave to Viet Nam. Then I referred to Cuba, and I said that

***Frei: Eduardo Frei, Chilean Christian Democratic leader; President of Chile before Allende.

although Fidel and them made their own revolution without the Soviet Union and help from the socialist world, they would have had a very hard time to make it, you can't transform the economy without help, economic aid, factories and so on. You need guns to oppose aggression, and economic and military help.

This was all helpful; for the first time we raised ideological questions, we called for ideological struggle. There are so many cross-currents causing confusion, splintering of groups, fighting among themselves and so on.

Could you talk about the internal situation in Guyana?

The regime is corrupt, number one. Number two, it practices discrimination. Three, it is following an economic planning model that is tied in with imperialism; as I was mentioning, first the Puerto Rican model and now the model of ECLA and the Alliance for Progress.

How does it fit into imperialist plans?

Well, the original plan, from '66 to '72—\$300,000,000—three-fourths of it was for infrastructure: roads, sea defense, airports, public buildings, harbor. And even infrastructure that was to aid agriculture, irrigation, water control schemes, which we were doing, was sabotaged.

Now, this has to be looked at against the background of what is happening in the capitalist world. At that time they had surpluses not only of industrial goods, but even foods. The Common Market had butter and all kinds of things they didn't know what to do with. In the United States they were paying the farmers not to produce. In that context they wanted neither agricultural nor



industrial development in Guyana. So everything was done for highways and airstrips and so on—that's one aspect.

The plan could not satisfy the people, it couldn't solve the unemployment problem. Because you generate more employment if you go in for production. You put one man on the farm, and it creates jobs for five or six others. Same with a factory. But if you build a road, when the job is finished it is finished. You need another loan to make another job, it does not generate jobs, so it doesn't solve the unemployment problem. And it doesn't solve the financial problem of debt repayment. If you increase production you can pay for the debts out of production. But if you don't produce, to pay the debts you have to tax the people. So this becomes a burden on the people later on, with high taxation which causes dissatisfaction.

This was prevalent; that's why you have fraud in '68 and more fraud in the last elections in '73, where the Army moved in to seize the ballot boxes. This has to be seen in the context of declining support for the government. It resorts to fraud; it resorts to Army intervention, because it cannot win a free and fair election. Why can it not win an election? Because of its economic policies which cannot solve the unemployment problem which is causing higher prices, inflation, and so on.

A year ago, before the election, they were saying "Guyana never had it so good." Now they are all admitting it is not only a grave crisis, but that the country is facing collapse. One minister said the other day, "There has not been such a crisis in Guyana, not since the Depression."

We had a balance of payments deficit of \$100 million last year. Of this \$85 million was in trade and \$15 million was in financial transactions. Trade, because they are buying more than selling, production is falling: rice, bauxite, sugar, the three main products, are going down. So they are selling less, and they are buying more, why? Because they have created a huge bureaucracy, which has expanded from \$28 million in '64 to \$94 million now. They can't find jobs for the people, so they create a desk for them. Jobs for the boys. Bigger salaries, bigger allowances. When I was Premier, my salary was less than \$1000 a month, including allowances. Burnham is getting over \$5000 a month, salary and allowances now. Senior ministers are getting over \$3000 a month. So, with all this cash in the hands of these people, they are consuming conspicuously. We don't produce anything in Guyana, so you must meet their needs by imports. And the banks are giving credit not to the farmers, but to the businessmen who are increasing imports, while production is going down.

In 1964 we produced 165,000 tons of rice. Last year it was 95,000. They have markets for it, but they can't produce. We sold to Cuba, because after supplying the West Indies, we had a surplus, for the first time in our history. That's why I made a deal

with Cuba, I was Minister of Trade then. But cannot now even satisfy the West Indian requirements.

How would a balanced development program Guyana be carried out?

This is how we see it: 1) We must have industrialization. Nationalize: sugar, bauxite, mainly, banking, insurance and foreign trade. These are the main planks of our nationalization. 2) Transform sugar, like Cuba has done. Not only mechanization, but by-products, livestock feed, they are going in for chemical industry now . . .

They're building houses out of it.

Yes, they are making walls out of it and making paper of bagasse* and all this, which we are not doing. We are selling raw sugar abroad. We are getting 50¢ a gallon for molasses. We sell raw, high-proof rum at \$1 a gallon, which is \$1 American. We should industrialize the sugar, in other words, like Cuba is doing.

Bauxite. We are shipping raw bauxite, like Cuba was shipping nickel, raw ore. Now they are going, with the help of the Soviet Union and the socialist world, to have a nickel refinery. We feel we must have a refinery, for smelting bauxite and a fabricating plant; in other words our heavy industry must be based on aluminum. But Burnham cannot do that because he is tied to the imperialist world. And they are not interested in setting up aluminum smelting plants in Guyana. Number three: 70% of our country is forest. We believe that a complex of industry should be set up in wood. All kinds of tar, alcohol, wallboards, whole show, paper, pulp and everything. A big industrial complex can be developed out of that.

Fishing. Like Cuba has done. We have wonderful fishing, both inland and outside.

These are our main resources. We have some gold and diamonds. They were doing manganese at one time but they closed it down. But the country has not yet been prospected properly, to know even what is there.

Anyway, those are the basic things. We feel that emphasis must be based on industry and agriculture, concentrate our emphasis on those, as distinct from what Burnham has been doing, concentration on infrastructure.

Then land reform—it is not such a grave problem in Guyana as in Latin America, but still, we need a certain amount of land reform.

Then, of course, workers' participation, farmers' participation. Without which nothing will really work.

*bagasse: what's left after you squeeze the juice out of sugarcane.