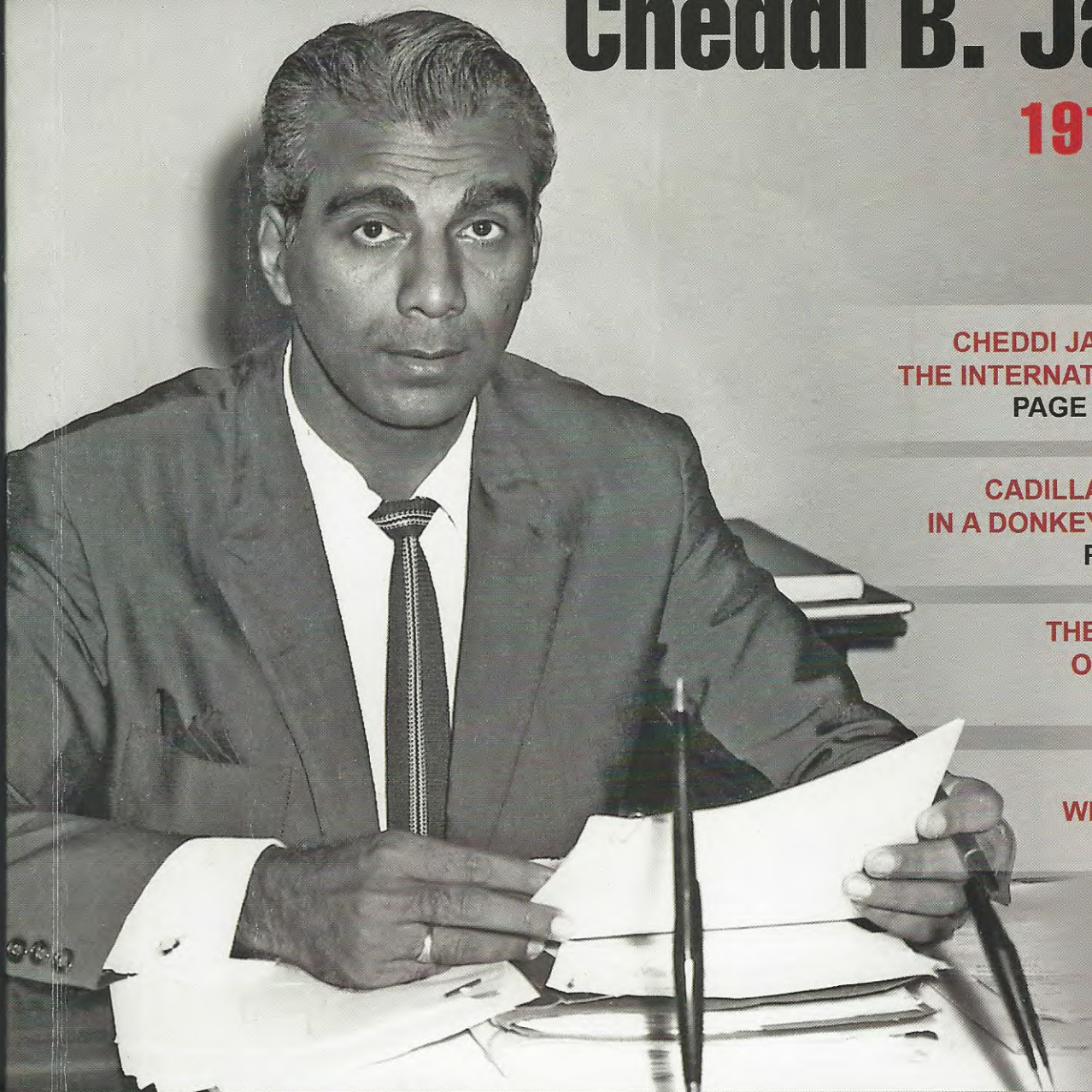


# THE THINKER

Volume 1

January - June 2018

## **CELEBRATING** **The Centenary Birth Anniversary of** **Cheddi B. Jagan** **1918-2018**



**CHEDDI JAGAN:  
THE INTERNATIONALIST  
PAGE 1**

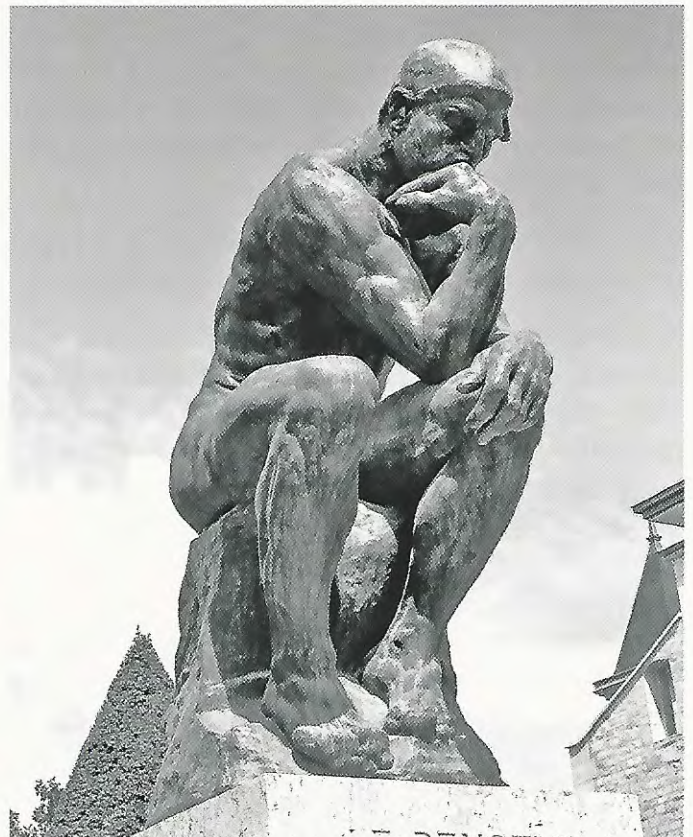
**CADILLAC LIFESTYLE  
IN A DONKEY-CART ECONOMY  
PAGE 5**

**THE TICKET OUT  
OF POVERTY  
PAGE 9**

**WHAT IF CBJ  
WERE ALIVE TODAY?  
PAGE 13**

# Table of Contents

|  |           |   |           |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|
| <b>Editorial.....</b>  | <b>ii</b> | <b>The Fight For Free &amp; Fair Elections In Guyana .....</b>  | <b>49</b> |
| <b>Cheddi Jagan: The Internationalist.....</b>   | <b>1</b>  | <i>Ganga Persaud</i>  |           |
| <i>Donald Ramotar</i>  |           | <b>Cheddi Jagan's Vision for Hemispheric Integration .....</b>  | <b>52</b> |
| <b>Cadillac Lifestyle in a Donkey-Cart Economy .....</b>   | <b>5</b>  | <i>Dr Odeen Ishmael</i>   |           |
| <i>Professor David Dabydeen</i>  |           | <b>Cheddi Jagan: The Intellectual .....</b>                     | <b>56</b> |
| <b>The Ticket Out of Poverty .....</b>   | <b>9</b>  | <i>Hydar Ally</i>   |           |
| <i>Dr Frank Anthony</i>  |           | <b>Cheddi Jagan's Growth and Poverty Reduction Policies....</b> | <b>58</b> |
| <b>What if CBJ Was Alive Today? .....</b>  | <b>13</b> | <i>Dhanraj Singh</i>  |           |
| <i>Earl Bousquet</i>   |           | <b>Small Country, Great Leader .....</b>                        | <b>62</b> |
| <b>The Cheddi I Knew.....</b>  | <b>16</b> | <i>Dr Randolph Persaud</i>                                      |           |
| <i>Clement Rohee</i>   |           | <b>The Heroic Struggle of Jagan and Mandela .....</b>           | <b>66</b> |
| <b>Restoring Indigenous Pride Jagan's Legacy .....</b>   | <b>19</b> | <i>Dr Vishnu Bisram</i>   |           |
| <i>Anna Correia de Sá</i>  |           | <b>A View From Outside.....</b>                                 | <b>70</b> |
| <b>Cheddi Jagan and the Agriculture Revolution.....</b>  | <b>22</b> | <i>Dr Tara Singh</i>  |           |
| <i>Dharamkumar Seeraj</i>  |           |   |           |
| <b>Dr. Cheddi Jagan: The Strategic Leader<br/>of the 21st Century.....</b>   | <b>26</b> |   |           |
| <i>Dr Devindranauth Rawana</i>   |           |   |           |
| <b>Cheddi Jagan and Women .....</b>  | <b>28</b> |   |           |
| <i>Indranie Chandernal</i>   |           |   |           |
| <b>Political Engineering or Social Healing?.....</b>   | <b>31</b> |   |           |
| <i>Professor James Rose</i>  |           |   |           |
| <b>Cheddi Jagan: The Working People's Leader.....</b>  | <b>37</b> |   |           |
| <i>Komal Chand</i>   |           |   |           |
| <b>Cheddi Jagan: The People's Hero, Set the Stage for<br/>a Modern Guyana Almost 60 Years Ago .....</b>                                  | <b>44</b> |   |           |
| <i>Dr Lesli? Ramsammy</i>  |           |   |           |
| <b>Guyanese Must Reflect on Cheddi Jagan's Selfless<br/>Dedication as We Continue to Celebrate 100 Years of his<br/>Life's Work.....</b> | <b>47</b> |   |           |
| <i>Peter Jailall</i>   |           |   |           |



*The Thinker (French: Le Penseur) is a bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin.*

# Editorial

The Editorial Committee of 'The Thinker' is delighted to introduce to the reading public this new and first edition of this Journal.

The Journal is intended to provide fresh and critical perspectives on local and international issues, while at the same time providing a platform for discourse on matters of public interest.

The articles in The Thinker are written by individuals who have contributed to the national discourse either through scholarship or by way of public service. Articles are carefully selected to reflect a variety of views and perspectives.

This first edition of The Thinker is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. Cheddi Jagan, whose birth centenary is being observed this year. Apart from his numerous accomplishments in the political and professional spheres, Dr. Jagan has distinguished himself as an intellectual of no mean order. He had an active and fertile mind; an extraordinary and prolific writer and someone who was never too shy to think, as it were, outside of the box even if it meant going against the grain of conventional thinking on matters of politics and ideology. He was a visionary whose concepts of a better society continue to have relevance and currency in an increasingly complex and complicated world.

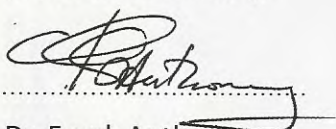
This Journal is intended to uphold the highest norms of professionalism and ethics, and will, as far as possible, attempt to bring to the reading public articles that are original and well researched.

The Journal will be produced and printed on a bi-annual basis. Except for this inaugural edition, which is dedicated to Dr. Jagan, all subsequent editions will cover a wide range of subject matter which would include, though not limited to topics such as politics, economics, culture, international affairs, environment and current affairs.

In this regard, the Editorial Committee of The Thinker will welcome contributions from writers from a diversity of backgrounds, who share the mission and objectives of this Journal. All comments and feedback will be acknowledged with a view to improving the quality of the Journal and taking the discourse to new and higher levels.

We look forward to the encouragement and support of the public as we seek to provide a platform on which to further enhance the national dialogue on the way forward.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee, I wish to thank all those who so willingly contributed articles. I wish also to acknowledge the assistance of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre for providing suitable photographs and research materials, the publishers and all those who, in one way or the other assisted in making this publication a reality.



Dr. Frank Anthony  
Editor

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# Editorial Policy

'The Thinker' is intended to be an independent Journal with an Editorial Committee which will determine the policy outlook and theoretical orientation of the Journal.

The Thinker will be printed and published both in print and electronic format.

The following are some editorial policy guidelines:

1. The Thinker will be a bi-annual publication and will be available both in print and electronic format.
2. It will reflect a diversity of views and perspectives on particular subjects areas such as politics, ideology, environment, sociology, international affairs, gender issues among others.
3. It will publish well-researched articles that are of high ethical and academic standard. Plagiarism and unauthorized reproduction of other published works will not be permitted.
4. It will not publish articles that are libelous or intended to promote any racist or ethnocentric views or opinions.
5. Articles should be around 1500-2000 words and should be of high standard regarding content and analysis.
6. It will promote a progressive worldview and strive for excellence in the publication and dissemination of innovative, objective and creative writing that satisfy high academic standards and which could stand up to the highest level of academic and intellectual scrutiny.



**CHEDDI JAGAN**  
**MAN OF THE PEOPLE**

# CHEDDI JAGAN: THE INTERNATIONALIST



One of the characteristic features of Cheddi Jagan's life was his abiding interest in international affairs. Any student of his work would see that interest running through his writings and speeches like a red thread.

Even before he was introduced to the works of Karl Marx and Lenin, we could see that he had a keen interest in world affairs.

The earliest writing that came down to us was a letter he wrote to his friend Orrin Dummet in 1942. At that time he was in a sanatorium in the United States recovering from tuberculosis. In that letter is deposited some of the earliest inklings of his fertile mind.

It was written while the Second World War was still raging. The British were recruiting soldiers from the Colonies to fight against Germany. The young Jagan saw that as an opportunity to press the British for concessions because he was of the view that after the war the British would abandon the people's interest again.

By then these political views were influenced by Theodore Roosevelt, the then President of the US, who came up with the New Deal proposal to get the US out of economic and social problems. Thomas Paine's writing also influenced him during the American War of Independence. The National Liberation Movement at the time was being led by



*Dr. Jagan with P. J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica*

India and the leaders of the Congress Party, Gandhi and Nehru, more Nehru than Gandhi impacted on his mind.

Indeed, you could see those influences on him throughout his life. While in government between 1957 to 1964 and from 1992 to 1997, you could see Roosevelt influence on his social and economic policies. In his famous book, 'The West on Trial' one can see Nehru's methodology which Nehru used to write his autobiography, had a significant impact on Jagan.

At that period the National Liberation Movements were growing in the colonies all over the world. While the British recruited the Colonials to defend Britain, the other effect was that it created a growing consciousness in the colonial world that freedom was necessary and possible. It gave an impetus to the movement for independence.

India was on the brink of breaking the Colonial chains, China, a semi-colony, was also cutting those oppressive bonds. The African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa saw the emergence of new leaders in Mandela, Tambo, Yussuf Dadoo, Joe Salvo and others. The Mau Mau war led by Jomo Kenyatta was raging and impacting considerably all over the world.

That period produced real giants on every Continent, prominent among whom was Cheddi Jagan.

Cheddi was never a narrow-minded nationalist. He saw the struggle in British Guiana and later Guyana, as part of an international struggle for freedom and social liberation. His reading of Marx and Lenin cemented those views.

For him, the victory of any oppressed people in Asia, Africa or Latin America, or the victory of any peace and democratic movement in Europe and North America was also our victory. So too he felt that a victory of the PPP here will help other peoples' causes throughout the world. He saw all the colonial countries having a common enemy, colonialism, and imperialism.

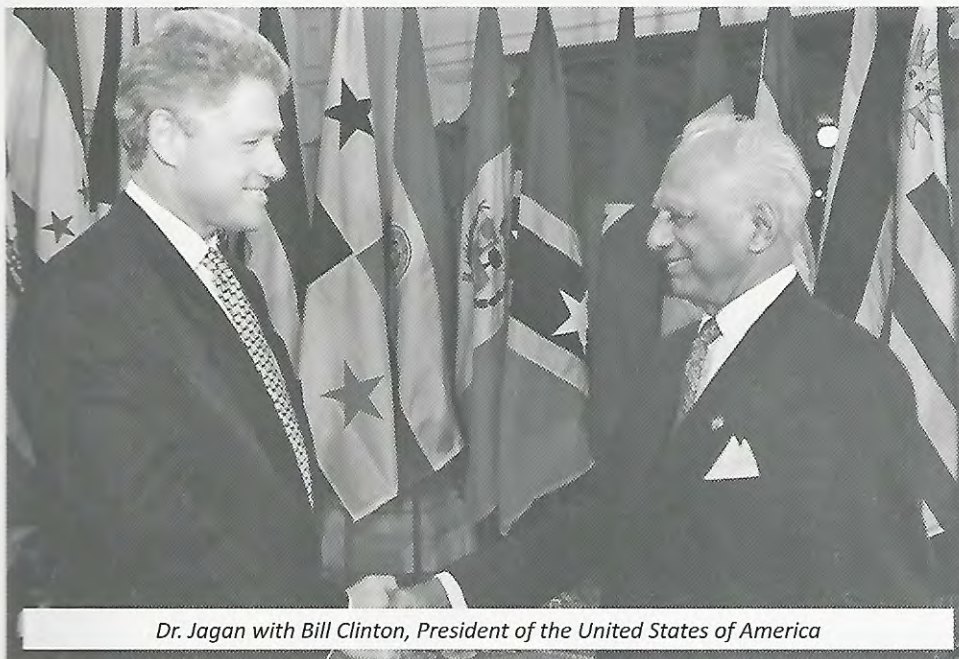
He, therefore, kept himself informed of the situation in the various parts of the world. He followed the positions of the colonial powers, UK, France, Portugal, and Holland. He also followed big countries that had substantial weight in world affairs, such as the United States, Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and later Russia, China and more particularly the struggles of colonial and oppressed peoples. He was not only aware of the current affairs in those countries. No!. He made a study of their history. That accounts for his profound understanding of international relations.

He also had a very keen interest in what was taking place in the socialist world. He rejoiced in every victory and advances they made. He felt that they were serving as an example of another/alternative path for development. That influence led to the creation of the welfare state in many developed countries.

Steeped in that conviction, he felt that he had to give solidarity to the other contingent of the international movement for peace, freedom, and socialism. In the process, he developed a keen international spirit and outlook in PPP members and kept the Guyanese people informed and abreast with world politics.

The solidarity he extended to the struggling peoples the world over for freedom, peace, and justice was not merely confined to statements, but he organized ongoing demonstrations in Guyana.

I recall joining several discussions at a very young



*Dr. Jagan with Bill Clinton, President of the United States of America*

age on the Nigerian civil war, the Biafran War.

At the time of the war in Vietnam, the PPP came out on many occasion in demonstrations outside the United States (US) embassy protesting the devastating bombing of Vietnam. Veteran PPP Leader E.M.G. Wilson was arrested during one of these activities.

Cheddi Jagan and the PPP also strongly supported the civil rights movement in the USA. PPP and PYO members took to the streets to demonstrate for the freedom of Angela Davis and the Soledad Brothers. Earlier, he stood with Paul Robeson in fighting for civil rights in the US.

As Cheddi Jagan's legend grew and he became one of the foremost internationalists he worked tirelessly in developing the movement in the Caribbean. He helped the New Jewel Movement in Grenada; the Workers Party of Jamaica; the movements in St. Lucia and St. Vincent. Indeed, throughout the region, he sought out and worked with progressive forces. He wanted to ensure that the Caribbean peoples involved themselves in these struggles.

We can go on and on talking about those issues. However, I would like to focus on some special areas.

Dr. Cheddi Jagan kept the Guyanese people informed about the struggles by Mao who led the Communist struggle in China since the 1940s. A lot of information could be found in the pages of the Political Affairs Committee Bulletin before the PPP

was founded.

He also led demonstrations outside Prime Minister Burnham's office calling on the then Guyana Government to seat the People's Republic of China as the legitimate representative of the people of China. The PNC regime had voted at the United Nations against this on one occasion and abstained several times after. It voted in favour only after Nixon's visit to China in 1972.

With Cuba, Cheddi Jagan and the PPP took a very principled position. Cheddi

Jagan supported the Cuban Revolution from the Beginning. On his way from London after the 1960 Independence talks, he traveled to Cuba and met with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

Under his leadership, British Guiana, together with Mexico, were the only countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that had relations with Cuba. He traded with Cuba, selling rice and timber at a time of the blockade. He had cultural exchanges with the Cuban people. British Guiana sent the first steel pan to Cuba. We had a trade representative stationed here, and we also had our representative, Charlie Cassato, in Cuba.

Many had criticized him for those acts. However, for him, these were matters of principle. Today, Cuba has moved from only having the support of British Guiana to now the whole continent. Cuba has also educated thousands of people in the region and extended solidarity to fighters everywhere. Guyana benefitted from those relations in later years.

China has now become the most critical country in development. Today, it is China's investments that are the main drivers of our world economy.

The events in the world that have followed has justified and vindicated Cheddi Jagan's position.

Moreover, I wish to point out that Guyanese fighting for freedom and democracy also benefitted from the solidarity of like-minded people throughout the world.



*Dr. Cheddi Jagan meeting with Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania*

During the 1960s when the British Guiana internal government came under severe pressure, from Anglo-American forces together with local reactionary forces in the colony, the peace forces in the world came out in solidarity with democratically minded Guianese.

Cuba helped in sending fuel to British Guiana and demonstrations in London staved off even worse consequences.

Later, when the PPP came under pressure by the PNC dictatorial rule, like the three trials of Arnold Rampersaud, the PPP received significant support from friends abroad. Maurice Bishop of Grenada came to defend Arnold. So too did John Bowling of the United Kingdom.

From the United States, Margaret Burnham, the lawyer who defended Angela Davis, also traveled here to stand up with the PPP in defense of democracy and justice.

The PPP received solidarity messages from freedom fighters everywhere. These included ANC, Oliver

Tambo, Joe Salvo, Yussuf Dadoo, other parts of Africa, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

Cheddi Jagan also led the struggle in the region for World Peace and Disarmament. He, for years, held the position of President of the Guyana Peace Council and was also a Vice President of the World Peace Council.

Right down to the end of his life he was looking for ways to deal with international issues to benefit Guyana and other developing countries.

One of his last major works was his proposal for New Global Human Order. This was a programme to promote social and economic development in the world. It was crafted in the changed circumstances of the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, in it, you would find his passion for social and economic justice and his burning desire to end the terrible inequalities that exist in our world.

This work was adopted by the United Nations after he passed.

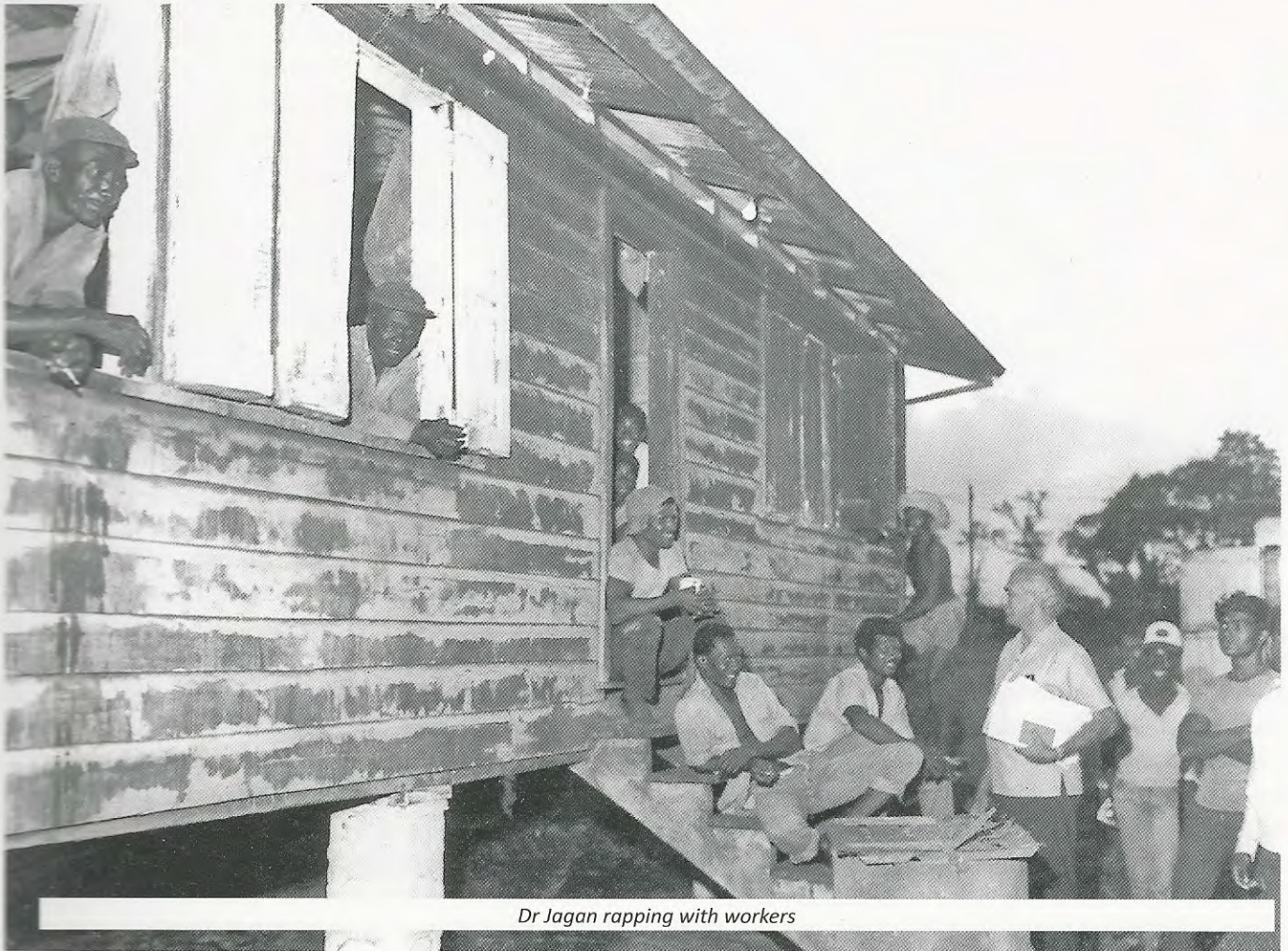
Cheddi Jagan's life was full and rich. From the inception of his political life, he took the side of the poor and oppressed, not only as a champion of Guyanese but people everywhere. He never wavered, he stood firm in his principled position.

He was a real patriot and an internationalist of the highest caliber.



*Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer and contributes regularly to the Mirror Newspaper and other publications.*

# CADILLAC LIFESTYLE in a donkey-cart economy



"You cannot have a Cadillac lifestyle in a donkey-cart economy": When Cheddi Jagan died in 1997, I addressed the Executive Board of UNESCO and quoted these words from him, speaking about his utmost honesty and frugality, and adding that, unlike countless rulers of states, he never stole from the national treasury.

I had first-hand experiences of his fiscal decency. Between 1985 and 1992, I invited Dr Jagan to give lectures at the University of Warwick( the Warwick

Centre for Caribbean Studies, now renamed the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies, has, since 1985, hosted lectures and visits by Professor Clive Thomas, Professor Clem Seecharan, Moses Nagamootoo, Sir Shridath Ramphal, Dr. Cedric Grant, Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, Derek Bernard, Navin Chanderpaul, inter alia; it has hosted the Walter Rodney Memorial Lecture for over 30 years, and continues to do so). Many politicians in the region had written him off as a has-been,

especially because of the regular fiddling with national elections, which prevented him from taking leadership of the country. Warwick, however, treated him with great courtesy, ensuring that he was met at the airport, that he travelled first class on trains from London to the University, and that he was given the best guest-room on campus, with our security staff briefed about his stay. Cheddi Jagan complained about these arrangements. He wanted a simple room. He wanted to take the bus to the University. "A first-class train ticket costs as much as the monthly salary of a nurse in Guyana. Don't waste money; I can take a bus," he insisted. When I led him to his plush room, he looked around and uttered the phrase, "the tyranny of hospitality." When I asked him what he meant, he explained that people tended to treat him with excessive hospitality, which he could not escape from. "Save money, give it to the poor" was his mantra.

On another occasion, when he was President, he asked me, his guest at State House, to invite Clive Lloyd for a breakfast meeting. It was an Easter weekend, and President Jagan had given all the domestic staff a holiday. When the morning came, President Jagan and I searched the fridge for food; we couldn't find plates but, after frantic searching, I discovered them in a special cupboard on the first floor of State House; neither of us knew how the microwave worked; neither of us could find where the staff had put the coffee jar. Janet Jagan, who may have known more, was abroad. So, I served poor Clive Lloyd with some pieces of cheese, a few slices of mango, and a glass of water. I explained to Clive Lloyd that at State House, our breakfasts were minimalist. Clive Lloyd, being the great man that he is, muttered approval, and the two of them immediately embarked upon a discussion of Clive Lloyd's plans for a new cricket stadium in Guyana. Their talk was so extensive that President Jagan delayed a meeting he was scheduled to attend. They drank the water, to ease their throats, neglecting the cheese and mango, which I salvaged for my own breakfast when they had departed.

On another occasion, I accompanied him to a meeting with some villagers outside Georgetown. He had just been elected President and was disdainful of the trappings of power. He told the driver to switch off the ostentatious siren. He was upset that the security car in front was waving away traffic which was coming too close to the

Presidential vehicle. He told me his unease at having to travel in an expensive vehicle with two other cars of security men accompanying him. He would have preferred the old Japanese-made car that his wife, Janet Jagan, drove around in. If he had lived, he would have admired President Pepe Mujica of Uruguay (2010-2015) who shunned limousines for his battered Volkswagen Beetle and gave almost all his salary to the poor. Indeed, when President Cheddi Jagan died, he left no will, because he owned nothing. When I explained to his widow, Janet Jagan, that any royalties from his books would go to this estate, she exclaimed, "what estate? He died intestate. He had no property, no money. What little he had was given away, to family, to the Party, and to the poor."

It was through books that I cemented my friendship with Cheddi Jagan. I was editor of Janet Jagan's books of children's stories, at her request, when I first met her in 1992. Cheddi Jagan asked me to put together a selection of his political speeches and find a publisher who would produce the book at no cost to himself. This was done, and he asked me to reprint some essays he had written. When he died, there was incredible grief in the country, and people from all walks of life sent poems and letters to the newspapers. These were gathered up and published in a volume entitled 'Cheddi Jagan. Tributes in Prose and Verse'. I had the privilege thereafter to publish a selection of his correspondence, which included fascinating letters relating to the establishment of the University of Guyana. Of course, Cheddi Jagan was a man of books. His autobiography is widely acknowledged as a masterpiece of the genre; there is no comparable volume by another Caribbean political leader. His reading was mostly dictated by his political leanings, but I can say for sure that he appreciated literary writers, once they put their art to the service of the masses. He had a conventional Socialist view about the role of literature in society, but this was offset by Janet Jagan's great appreciation of art for art's sake; art for the perfection of form; art for the expression of the ineffable; art as the language of the unconscious; art for its beauty, which, as Keats said, was truth. It was Janet Jagan who insisted that Castellani House should be our National Art Gallery, as opposed to housing offices for politicians and civil servants.

I have many anecdotes about Cheddi Jagan, which I will commit to paper on another occasion. There



*The home where Dr Jagan was born*

were the stories, for example, that his driver told me, about having to stop the car at Cheddi Jagan's request, to salvage a length of wire that someone had discarded by the roadside." It will come in useful one day," he said to the bemused but admiring driver. Or the story his security detail divulged, about Cheddi Jagan attending a business dinner, interrupting the discussion to tell him to collect the leftover bones for the dog in State House( an extremely mild-mannered and affable pet named 'Terror '). Or the story about him swimming in the pool at Castellani House but insisting that the schoolchildren should also swim there, even if he was using it at the time. He was extremely thoughtful about everyone and everything, except himself. Hence the sorrowful detail of his heart-attack, when he had to be carried in a Berbice chair down the stairs of State House by the security guards. Unlike many other Heads of States, he didn't have an ambulance parked permanently at his residence for such emergencies.

My best remembrance of Cheddi Jagan was of him as a teacher. I once asked him as to why his close colleague, Ranji Chandisingh, had left the PPP to join up with President Forbes Burnham. At the time, he was engrossed with the national emergency resulting from the spillage of cyanide and other toxic materials from the holding tanks of Omai into the Essequibo river. He could easily have brushed aside my enquiry or addressed my curiosity with a terse response. Instead, he spent half-an-hour outlining the political history of Guyana, taking in such subjects as Fidel Castro's need to befriend President Burnham and other Caribbean leaders so they could oppose the American boycott and isolation of Cuba; about the PPP's position on 'critical support' of the PNC over the nationalisation of sugar and bauxite; about his ideas for a Mandela-inspired system of shared governance. Eventually, having put everything in detailed context, he told me why his colleague had crossed over to the

PNC. There was not a shred of bitterness over his colleague's seeming betrayal, President Jagan instead seeing the abandonment of the PPP as 'understandable.' He may not have agreed with Ranji Chandisingh's action, but he sought to 'understand' it. All those who knew Cheddi Jagan, as Leader of the Opposition or as President, will testify to his openness to political foes. He harboured no bitterness; instead, he was willing to embrace those who had criticised him, however harshly, once he felt they could make a contribution to the Guyanese society. My personal example of this: knowing that Professor Clive Thomas had visited Warwick University, he asked me to phone him to find out whether they could meet to discuss matters relating to the European Union and the ACP. President Jagan wanted to appoint Professor Clive Thomas his Ambassador to the European Union, but the PPP had had prior disagreements with the WPA pre-1992 elections. "I don't want to contact Clive through official channels. I want to meet him informally, to begin with. The two of you are University people; you phone him," he explained. I made the call. I cannot recall whether Professor Thomas was abroad, or was ill at the time, but I left a message with his wife, who answered the phone and left Guyana the next day. I don't know what followed. Another example of President Jagan's openness was his respect for his predecessor, Desmond Hoyte. Between 1993-1997, wearing my hat as a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO, I would call upon Desmond Hoyte to brief him on Guyana's latest relations with UNESCO. Desmond Hoyte was a gracious host, gave me his valuable time, talked to me about the latest books by Guyanese writers( he was an avid reader and lover of poetry and fiction, and a man of erudition; hence his creation of the Guyana Prize for Literature at a time when money was in short supply),and put me in touch with his then Education spokesperson, Dr Faith Harding. President Jagan not only encouraged me to report

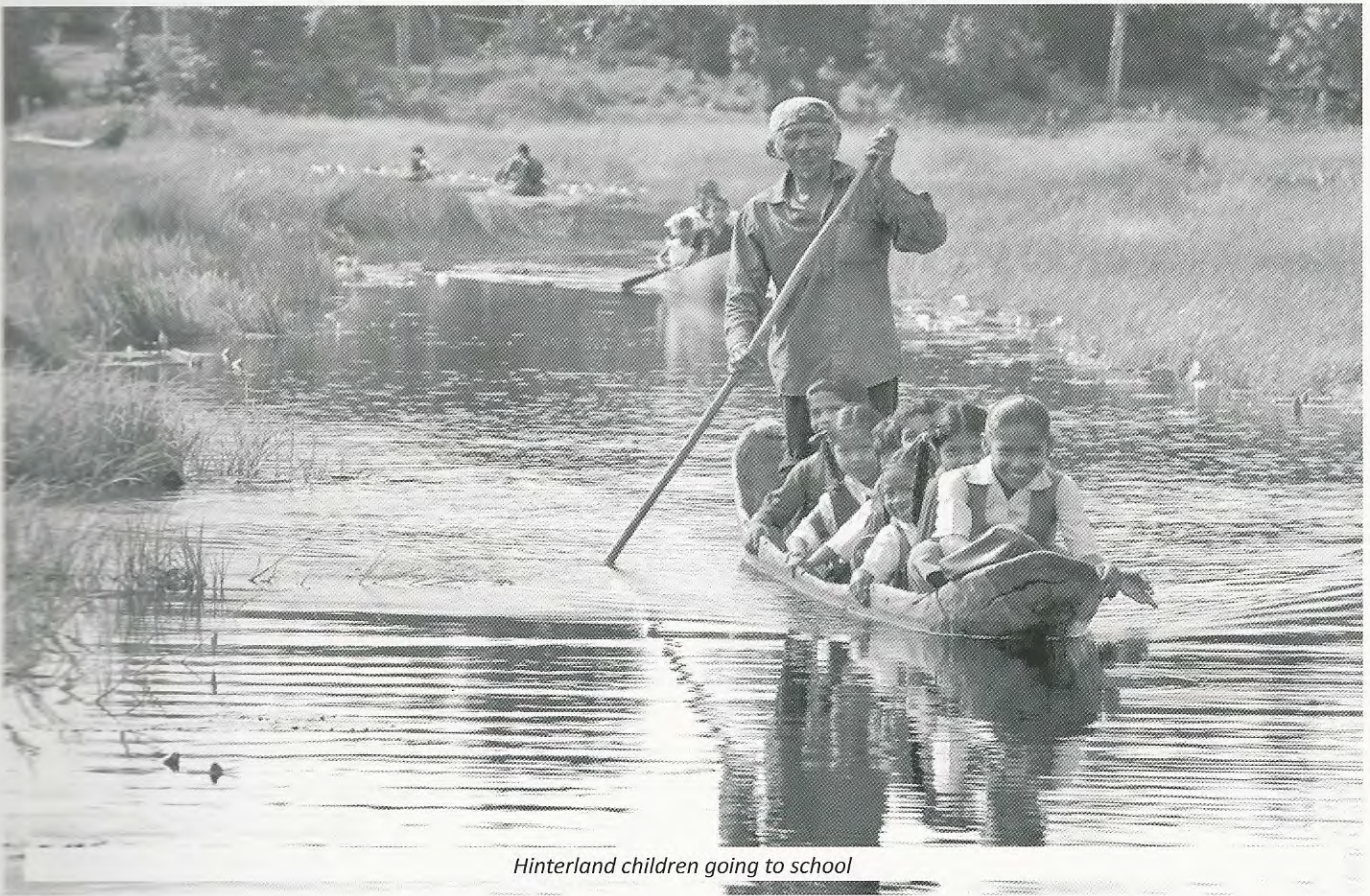
to Desmond Hoyte, Leader of the Opposition, but asked Janet Jagan to let me use her dilapidated and iconic car to go to the PNC headquarters at Sophia, so I could save the taxi fare. How thrilling it was to drive to the PNC Headquarters in Janet Jagan's battered car, to go through the Sophia security( who, invariably, recognised the car as belonging to Janet Jagan, but, out of courtesy, let me through without search), park under the PNC building, and walk up the stairs to meet Desmond Hoyte, all with the blessing of President Cheddi Jagan, who felt that Ambassadors should report both to him and to the Leader of the Opposition. On a personal level, these occasions were memorable, because of the elderly woman selling snacks underneath Congress Place. If I arrived too early for the appointment with Desmond Hoyte( I used to set off early, in case Janet Jagan's car broke down on the way), I would spend time eating plantain chips or cheese rolls or whatever else she sold, making sure I rinsed my mouth afterwards with a soft drink, in respect to Desmond Hoyte. It would have been unseemly to have met him with the remains of pastry in my teeth. After Cheddi Jagan's death, his successor in office, Janet Jagan, would continue to lend me her car to visit Desmond Hoyte, even though the two of them were immersed in hostilities.

So, in brief, I wish to testify to Cheddi Jagan's magnanimity, his desire to heal political divisions, his goal of shared governance at all levels. Some of my closest colleagues express deep scepticism about his political philosophy and his leaning towards the USSR, but, as a writer, I can only confess to having been in the presence of a shining human being. It has been a kind of benediction, for me. His love for people ("what is the point of being alive if we can't abolish poverty," he would say on many occasions) makes me ashamed whenever I do selfish and wasteful things. Even now, he chides me from the grave.



DAVID DABYDEEN was educated at Cambridge and London Universities before taking up positions at Oxford and Yale Universities. In 1984 he was appointed Lecturer at the University of Warwick and became a Professor of Literary Studies in 1997. He is presently a Professorial Fellow in the Office of the Vice Chancellor and President. Between 1997 and 2010 he represented Guyana as Ambassador to UNESCO in an honorary capacity; in 2010 to 2015 he was Guyana's Ambassador to China.

# THE TICKET OUT OF POVERTY



Hinterland children going to school

This year, as we celebrate the birth centenary of Dr. Cheddi Jagan, there is no doubt that he would have made a lasting impact on the lives of all Guyanese through his ideas, his politics, and philosophy. Growing up on the sugar plantation of Port Morant, Dr. Jagan witnessed firsthand the inequities of plantation life, people's daily struggles, and the challenges of breaking out of this squalid life. He became convinced that education was the way to escape the poverty trap and repeatedly reminded us, **"that your ticket out of poverty was through a good education."** This simple concept has provided the rationale for the profound changes that occurred in Guyana's public education system from colonial

times to present.

## The state of education

Dr. Jagan, wrote about the appalling state of education in "The West on Trial," *"Educational facilities were also inadequate. Primary education was free, but schools were understaffed, ill-equipped and overcrowded."* He regularly represented these issues in parliament, *"I received a letter from the Director of Education listing the schools in my constituency, and I am sorry to state that practically all of them are terribly overcrowded. For instance, St. Winifred's R.C. School in Newtown, Campbellville area, has accommodation for 325, but there are*

594 children on roll at present. These 594 children are taught by 13 teachers." Overcrowding was very pervasive. Also, many school-age children were unable to find a place in school. In 1948, the Ten-Year Planning Report had revealed that about 13,000 children between the ages of 6 and 14 years were not registered in schools. These and other problems led to the high levels of illiteracy, *"In 1946 the levels of illiteracy among Indians was 44.02 percent, and among Amerindians was 49.55 percent.* Many of the schools were owned by Christian churches, whose policies were inherently discriminatory since they cater primarily to Christians or those willing to convert to Christianity. These policies disenfranchised thousands of persons from other faiths and restricted their opportunity for an education.

The PPP's first political program which was published in the Thunder of April 1950, clearly stipulated that it would fight for "free and adequate provision of primary and secondary education for all." The Party also announced a number of proposed reforms, including the removal of church control or dual control of schools, and for the expansion of the teacher training program.

After the elections of April 1953, the Party set about implementing education reforms. But their efforts were cut short with the suspension of the British Guiana Constitution. The Minister of Education Forbes Burnham supported the call for the removal of church control or dual control of schools. However, after the split with the PPP, he changed his position.

The PPP, after returning to power in 1957, proceeded to reform the education sector. One of the first acts was to suspend the rule that teachers must become Christians before they can be employed in the schools. In 1953, 297 primary schools catered for 89,000 children, but there was a huge unmet need. Analyzing why more children were not attending school it was clear that the discriminatory policies of the denominational schools were one of the main barriers.

### Primary Education

To overcome these hurdles, the government passed the Education Amendment Act of 1960, which paved the way for secular education. The government promoted a policy to support more government

run schools or government-aided schools. Schools that receive government funding could not practice any form of discrimination. The effects of this policy were visible by 1964 when 61 new primary schools were added, increasing the amount to 358 primary schools. But an even more revealing story was the massive jump in primary school enrolment from 89,000 in 1953 to 156,918 in 1964, an increase of 76.3% of students.

Despite this impact, there was fierce resistance by the churches and opportunistic political leaders that claimed the takeover of the schools as part of a communist plot to brainwash people and take over the country. The PNC/UF coalition opposed the state control of schools. The PNC eventually changed its position and took over all church schools in 1976.

### Secondary Education

If primary education was difficult, secondary education was quite a luxury in British Guiana. Dr. Jagan quoted the Director of Education, "No grammar school education is or can be, provided for 99 percent of the elementary school children." To remedy this situation, the PPP began working on an expansion of secondary school spaces, a two-pronged approach was embraced, firstly building more secondary schools; and by September 1962 some schools were designated "all-age schools," with classes higher than Standard Four becoming the secondary department. The students were then prepared for the College of Preceptors (CP) examination. This allowed many Guyanese students an opportunity to access secondary education for the first time. Introduction of Common Entrance examinations in the 1960s was an example of using merit rather than socioeconomic status to award them space at a secondary school. Dr. Jagan speaking on the introduction of the Common Entrance examination, had this to say *"this year's intake into First forms has been the largest to enter school in any one year on the basis of a competitive examination open to all children of the required age. This is in keeping with our belief that education should be democratically organized."* In 1963, once a child passed Common Entrance examination s/ he was awarded a free place at a government secondary school. By 1964, the fee for government secondary school was abolished, ushering in an era of free secondary education.

### Tertiary Education



President Cheddi Jagan meeting with school children accompanied by Prime Minister Samuel Hinds

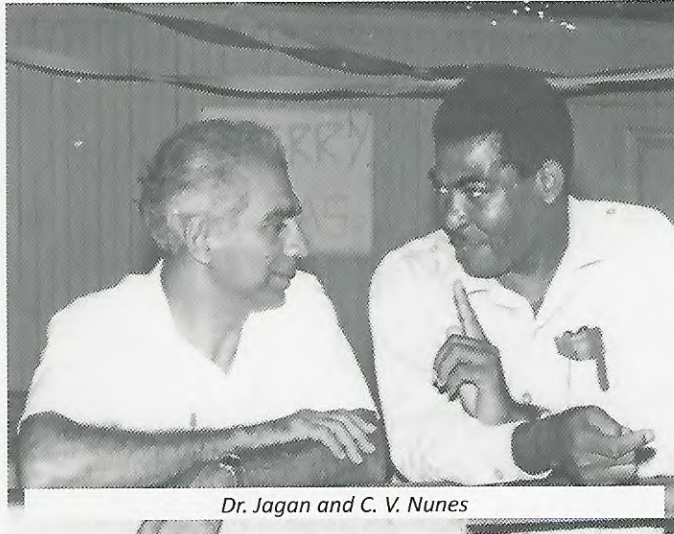
Tertiary education in British Guiana was limited to students who were wealthy enough to afford an education abroad, or who were fortunate to win a Guiana Scholarship. Dr. Jagan pointed out the challenges of the scholarship; "... if we cannot afford the Guiana Scholarship we should cut it out, having regard to the value of the Colony derives from it..." also, he felt that "Guiana Scholarship is limited to only a few students, in that only five schools were permitted to submit candidates for the Higher School Certificate, on the results of which the scholarship was awarded." In his mind an alternative solution had to be found; that is the establishment of a local university.

Dr. Harold Drayton recalls, *"On the 29th September 1961, the Minister of Education, Vernon Nunes set up a working party to consider the feasibility of establishing a local University. It reported on the 30th November that it would be feasible. Cabinet, on 6th December 1961, agreed in principle to the establishment of a University of British Guiana."* The Act to establish the University was passed in parliament and assented to by Governor, Ralph Grey on the 18th April 1963, paving the way for the inaugural opening of the University of Guyana on the 1st October 1963.

In anticipation of that opening moment, Dr. Drayton, writing in the *Thunder* in an article titled *The University of Guyana: a People's University*, said this "...that in the West Indies, despite the foundation

*of the UCWI in 1948, higher education was still restricted to the few. For the bulk of Guianese, education had meant, until then, primary education or no education at all. It is only now, in 1963, with a PPP Government in office, that the tracks are being widened for the building of a great new highway which will lead to University education for All the people of Guyana."* He went on to point out, *"The fact that nearly 700 persons applied for admission to the first year's classes are evidence of our people's thirst for education, and our people's desire to avail themselves of opportunities for study which are bound to become greater after independence is won."*

Despite the obvious benefits to be derived from this institution, there were many obvious detractors, those that call the university, "Jagan's night school," Dr. Jagan himself recalls in an article *Revolutionized Education*, the challenges that he experienced, *"One recalls the objections raised about the University of Guyana. The PNC leadership did everything to obstruct. The UNESCO experts at first said it would take three years to make a start. I virtually told them they were mad."* He went on to say, *"If we had followed the conventionalists, we would not have started, or perhaps would not have been in a position to start now. Obviously, one needs a revolutionary approach to the question of education."* The University of Guyana stands as lasting legacy and vision of Dr. Cheddi Jagan.



Dr. Jagan and C. V. Nunes

### Teacher Training

The PPP worked assiduously to improve teachers' education. By 1960 the annual intake of students was increased from 30 to 150. In 1962 to 1963, a UNESCO mission advised on the expansion of teachers training; this resulted in the expansion of the Training College in Georgetown and opening of a preservice teacher college at Belvedere on the Corentyne. In-service teacher-training centres were also established in Georgetown, Vreed-en-Hoop, Bush Lot (West Berbice), New Amsterdam, Skeldon, Anna Regina, Mackenzie, and Buxton. In 1964, the PNC-UF Coalition closed most of the teachers training centres except for Georgetown, New Amsterdam, and Mackenzie. These closures drastically reduced the number of trained teachers in the sector.

### Technical Education

The PPP recognized that development cannot take place in a vacuum; there is a need for trained personnel. This led to the establishment of the Guyana School of Agriculture in September 1963 at Mon Repos. The Government Technical Institute in Georgetown, which was established in 1951, was expanded and reorganized in 1957 to provide

craftsmen in the areas of mechanical, electrical and civil engineering. Expansion of technical education was contemplated. However, many of these plans were shelved when the PNC-UF Coalition took office.

### Other reforms

Dr. Jagan championed other reforms in the education sector. These included the introduction of Community High Schools and the negotiated introduction of the Multilateral Schools. The health and welfare of the students were a concern for the PPP government. This led them to introduce feeding programs and regular medical checkup in schools. Also, the schools' curriculum was reviewed in the early 1960s, and a new curriculum was introduced for primary and secondary schools. This also led to the standardization of textbooks and the government's deliberate attempt at introducing local content into the textbooks. In 1963, the Ministry of Education established a Publications Committee and commissioned a panel of local writers to develop appropriate Guyanese content for the curriculum. Also, another pioneering initiative was the broadcast to schools. Dr. Jagan perhaps best summarized the reforms in education when he said, *"No one can deny that the whole foundation of the educational system was well laid by the PPP regime.... comprehensively, it took in all aspects of the question, from kindergarten to university, from denominational "dual" control to Teachers Service Commission and teacher training, from curriculum planning to standardization of school books."*

The PPP-led reforms of the educational sector from 1957 to 1964 were quite revolutionary. They laid the foundation for the transformation of Guyana. Dr. Jagan did not speak abstractly about the ticket out of poverty; he worked diligently to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to get a good education.



Frank Anthony is the former Minister of Culture Youth and Sports. He is a graduate from the Russian Friendship University in Medicine and has a Master's Degree in Public Health from the Hebrew University in Israel. Dr. Anthony also lectures at the University of Guyana in Epidemiology. He is a Member of Parliament and an Executive and Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive Party. He was recently appointed the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP) Champion of Change.

# What if CBJ were alive today?

*The answers would only be the bountiful fruitage of positive speculation and fertile imagination.*



Cheddi and Janet Jagan celebrating with supporters

A popular calypso I grew up with says: *'If is a simple word, but we hardly pass a day without using it.'* Indeed, the word has been ringing in my ears ever since I realized the centenary of Cheddi Berret Jagan's birthday was approaching.

Born 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1918, CBJ's life started in a year that saw many great things. It marked the end of the First World War, but for obvious reasons, I prefer to highlight that it was also the year of the birth of Nelson Mandela.

Cheddi and Nelson have both departed this earth for The Great Beyond, and every day those of us who idolized them find a reason to ask ourselves 'What if they were alive today?'

Given the torture tearing through the African National Congress (ANC) at this particular time when President Jacob Zuma is refusing to abide by the rules he once guarded, it's easy to say that Mandela must be turning in his grave.

In the case of Guyana today, the number of questions regarding 'What if CBJ were alive today' is

simply too numerous even to consider listing them. But whenever meritorious situations arise there, I always rewind to my six years of internationalist service to the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and Civic (PPP-Civic) administration from 1993 to 1999.

Back then, I worked primarily alongside CBJ's wife, Janet, at the Mirror newspaper. I was Editor, and she was Editor in Chief. I also served in other capacities at state institutions, including as Chairman of the Board of the state-owned television station GTV, and a Director at the state-owned radio station, GBC.

My proximity to Comrades Cheddi and Janet was by no means peripheral, so it allowed me to virtually enter their minds at times to understand their thinking on issues in ways that many others not so close would not have.

I would not say that I influenced any of their decisions during that time, but I will admit that in most instances our thinking on issues coincided, whether during discussion or subsequent realization.

I had already been a close friend and comrade to both before arriving in Guyana, and that proximity naturally grew closer, equalling that with fellow journalist Moses Nagamootoo, the then PPP stalwart and Information Minister with whom I had developed decades of friendship at the regional and international level through the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), the Latin American Federation of Journalists (FELAP), and the Caribbean Association of Media Workers (CAMWORK).

Cheddi, Janet, Moses and I had also developed a professional and profoundly political relationship through the Union of Guyanese Journalists (UGJ), and all those ties came to bear during my tenure in Guyana, which also grew from my historical role as General Secretary of Saint Lucia's Workers' Revolutionary Movement (WRM), the PPP's fraternal organization in my native island.

I was to have returned to Saint Lucia in 1997 to keep a promise I had made to my comrade and fellow WRM member Dr. Kenny D. Anthony. He was based in Guyana as the CARICOM Consul General and had been recalled home by the Labour Party (SLP) to lead it into that year's General Elections.

Under Comrade Kenny's leadership, the SLP won 16 of the 17 seats contested, and I was supposed to serve as his Press Secretary, but on March 6<sup>th</sup> that year, the worst of all things happened: Comrade Cheddi died.

At the time, apart from my central role at the Mirror, I was also the host of the night-time flagship 'Action Line' program on GBC, as well as the weekly review program 'Issues in the News.' I also did running commentaries on both GBC and GTV, and in several ways contributed to the public information flow from party and state.

My services were equally needed by my party and government back home, but with Comrade Janet eventually selected to succeed Comrade Cheddi as PPP Leader and President of Guyana, I simply could not abandon ship in the middle of that important transition passage.

The seemingly unending procession of CBJ's body through Guyana's three counties (Demerara,

Berbice, and Essequibo), his cremation and the sprinkling of his ashes into the related rivers exposed me even more to the fact that when it comes to Guyana's history, his was akin to a biblical Life Without End.

The eulogies came from near and far and with one common denominator – all celebrated more than mourned his passing, each noting that his legacy could and would never be erased.

I had refused to take the interminable daily lines to fix my eternal memory of Cheddi to be an image of him in a box and consciously stayed away from most of his farewells, electing to keep my memory of him as that on the last day we met – February 14, 1997.

He needed my input on an important tactical consideration, and CBJ had summoned me to meet him at the National Park that day.

It turned out to be the most different of all meetings I ever had with him: he was walking the periphery of a section of the park as part of his daily exercise and asked that I join him. With no choice, I reluctantly did, wondering whether he'd got to know that I never exercised in my life and wanted to introduce me to the concept of taking care of my physical self. But it turned out that the meeting would take place as we walked and spoke.

At the end of the several laps, I was breathless and on edge, my tongue hanging as I expected he would at some point draw to my attention that at his age he was doing what I should be at mine. But he simply looked me in the eyes and smiled in a way that I got the message.

I left the park thinking that was one hell of a way for CBJ to have had me spend a part of my Valentine's Day. But, in the end, it was worth it: again our views had coincided on a tactical measure with implications for party and state.

In the 21 years since CBJ died, I have many times – too numerous to recall, far less mention – had to invoke the question 'What if...' in relation to what his position would have been on issues affecting the PPP and the Republic of Guyana, the Caribbean, and the world.

Among them:

- Would CBJ have chosen a successor?
- Would he have eventually succeeded in getting the PPP and the People's National Congress (PNC) to form the Patriotic National Front coalition government he had championed from time immemorial?
- Would he and Hugo Chavez have worked out a final solution to the seemingly interminable Guyana-Venezuela border problem?
- Would he have agreed to the policy of Term Limits for the Presidency?
- Would he have agreed to a defined parliamentary quota for women?
- Would he have agreed to the ExxonMobil formula of 65% to 35% profit sharing for Guyana's oil?
- Would he have opposed the ANC's decision to honour Forbes Burnham for Guyana's role in support of the liberation of South Africa and the Southern African liberation movements?
- Would he have set the path for Guyana to strive for 'Socialism with Guyanese Characteristics'?
- Would the United Nations (UN) have eventually adopted his formulas for a New International Economic Order and a New International Information Order?

The list can go on and on...

The big question on most minds today would obviously be 'What if Comrade Cheddi were alive today?'

To me, that is just a question – and one without an answer for many reasons, the first being that he isn't. Besides, every effort to answer any related question would be a product of the bountiful fruitage of positive speculation and fertile imagination.

Comrade Janet soon after joined her lifelong partner, and together they left a combined legacy that Guyana, the Caribbean, and the world can only do best to appreciate by putting them into perspective at all times, both individually and together.

Each gave their fullest to the struggle of all the Guyanese people, and to the general well-being of humankind. He was more than just the first avowed and declared Marxist Leninist to be elected in the Caribbean and Latin America, and she was more than the first communist woman also to be elected President of Guyana, with equal ranking throughout the world.

CBJ was and still is as much a Caribbean luminary as Mandela was and is to South Africa and the African continent. Their legacies are equal in the eyes and minds of all those who know enough about the totality of the respective contributions of each and both.

Neither the Caribbean nor Africa has done what is necessary to formally cement their respective legacies: regional, continental and global legacies. But then, while such eventualities are left to the minds of humans, history has in fact ensured, not only through their words and writings but more so through their actions, that their names can and will never be erased.

It is only left for the PPP and the ANC to be eternally guided in the directions they envisaged when they laid the first cornerstones for building their respective parties.



Earl Bousquet was a former Editor of the Mirror Newspaper. He was Chairman of the Board of Directors for the television station GTV and a Director at the Guyana Broadcasting Corporation. As a veteran Journalist, Earl served in various capacities in a number of Regional and International Organisations including the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), the Latin American Federation of Journalists (FELAP), and the Caribbean Association of Media Workers (CAMWORK). He served as General Secretary of Saint Lucia's Workers Revolutionary Movement (WRM).

# The Cheddi I Knew

Commemorative activities are currently taking place in Guyana, Jamaica, and Venezuela marking anniversaries since the demise of Cheddi Jagan, Michael Manley, and Hugo Chavez respectively.

These three progressive, revolutionary Caribbean and Latin American leaders passed away in March of 1997 and 2013.

Marx was right when he wrote in his Eighteenth Brumaire, Louis Bonaparte; "Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under the circumstances chosen by themselves but under the circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past..."

Jagan, Manley, and Chavez were all influenced by the struggles of their national heroes of the past as well as men like Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Simon Bolivar.

In Cheddi Jagan's case, it was more particularly US historian, Charles Beard, and progressive American writers like Mathew Josephson and George Seldes as well as Jawaharlal Nehru and later Karl Marx who influenced him.

At the local level, it was the leaders of the Berbice slave rebellion, the conditions of indentured labor and much later, the Enmore Martyrs that impacted his ideological and political outlook.

Thus, it was the circumstances, in some cases 'directly encountered,' i.e., Cheddi's experiences with racial segregation while studying in the United States and the struggle of the sugar workers at home. As well as those circumstances 'given and transmitted from the past,' i.e., the slave rebellions and struggles of the indentured laborers in the colony of British Guiana. These were the experiences that allowed men like Dr. Jagan to make, as it were, 'his history.' Not as he pleased, nor 'under the circumstances

chosen by himself but because of the "tradition of all the dead generations which weighed like a nightmare on the brain of the living" according to Marx.

Long before Dr. Jagan's death, and similarly, long after, much has been said and continues to be spoken and written about him. There have been praises as well as criticisms. While both are welcomed, they should be critically examined.

Take, for example, those who sing praises and engage in idolatry. I remember accompanying Dr. Jagan many years ago to a bottom house meeting at Dundee, Mahaicony. There was a huge crowd; villagers sat on jute rice bags while some stood and listened attentively to Dr. Jagan.

When he was finished speaking, questions and comments were entertained. The party organizer for that district at the time was a man by the name of Mohammed Saffee. He got up and passionately professed his love and admiration for Dr. Jagan and the PPP. And as though that were not enough, he unbuttoned his shirt and told the crowd, as if he was about to cry, that were he to tear open his chest, there wouldn't be anyone else, but Cheddi Jagan emblazoned on his heart. The crowd roared with laughter.

Some months after Mohammed Saffee defected and joined the PNC.

Fast forward to Henry Jeffrey's reasoning; 'Political thought and positioning are not static...'

In retrospect, could this be the explanation for Saffee's defection?

That experience remained with me to this day; it's not what you say, it's what you do. And importantly, there is need to watch out for the psychopants.



*Dr. Jagan campaigning against the War in Vietnam*

In any event, Jeffrey's view is instructive. PPP watchers while pretending to empathize with Jagan's views at the same time criticize his followers for betraying his legacy.

For those who may not understand, Jagan's legacy, like the man, it is a complex one; it is neither straightforward nor rigid as many tend to believe.

For him, the bottom line was national unity based on racial and working-class unity. But the path or paths to achieving this lofty objective, that's where the challenge was and still is.

Take for example the question of alliances.

Ever since his emergence on the political scene in the 1950's, Jagan worked tirelessly to seek out and to build alliances, both tactical and strategic, with individuals and organizations to achieve specific goals beneficial to the poor and downtrodden.

He did this while in the Colonial Legislative Council (Legco), which at that time, comprised of persons representing various constituencies. He would seek the support of and hammer out draft legislation with, colleagues from other constituencies until a common text was agreed.

During that period Dr. Jagan, though his origin, was rural, he nevertheless developed a keen interest in urban politics and the activities of the trade union

movement, the League of Coloured People(LCP) and the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA).

Jagan recognized that both the LCP and the BGEIA were inconsistent with his broader political and ideological outlook.

Had Jagan been a racist, his natural political habitat as an East Indian would have been the BGEIA; but being the man equipped with a scientific worldview, he took a different route and formed the multi-ethnic Political Affairs Committee (PAC) in 1946.

Jagan's acceptance of a recommendation that Burnham be Chairman of the PPP was a reflection of his predisposition towards racial unity. And the other steps he took; the creation of the All Party Committee between 1956-'57 to protest the deficiencies of the Renison Constitution and the extension of the state of emergency in the colony; his attempt to form a coalition government with the PNC in 1964; the call in 1977 for a 'National Patriotic Front and National Front Government'; his efforts at establishing the Patriotic Coalition for Democracy (PCD) following the rigged elections in 1985; not discounting his efforts thru GAWU to form the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FITUG) and eventually, the complicated negotiations with representatives of the Guyanese Action for Reform and Democracy (GUARD) resulting in the alliance with the Civic component in 1991, all attest to the passion and conviction Cheddi Jagan had as regards the value of, and the necessity for alliances as a basis for moulding a political culture that would lay the foundation for national unity in Guyana.

Since his death, the Party that Jagan helped found sixty-seven years ago has gone through and is still going through changes that will impact its philosophical and ideological foundations.

In Parties, like the PPP, it is natural to have serious

debates, disagreements, and agreements on a range of issues.

Cheddi Jagan always encouraged such polemics in the PPP. He was in word and deed a good listener. There were many occasions when discussions, for example, on 'Critical Support' or to contest or not elections lasted for days at the Executive Committee or Central Committee of the Party.

There was another occasion, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago where a meeting took place between Dr. Jagan and a group of UWI intellectuals. The discussion kept going around in circles and lasted for hours. Away from the venue, I turned to Dr. Jagan and asked for his impressions. His response was terse; 'Some people believe they know it all.'

Jagan was a people's intellectual. He didn't have a Ph.D. nor an M.Sc. He secured a degree in Dental Surgery along with a B.Sc at Northwestern University in the US.

And though he didn't berate anyone armed with academic qualifications he could match anyone of them at any forum.

Jagan's socialist views were in many instances wholly emasculated. He always stood in favour of a tri-sectoral market economy

. Nor was he supportive of a one-party state.

Many have done a grave injustice to the things Dr. Jagan stood for as expressed in his belief in national democracy, social and ecological justice, and a New Global Human Order.

That is the Cheddi Jagan I knew.



*Clement J. Rohee was former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Foreign Trade and then Minister of Home Affairs. Currently he is a Member of Parliament. Mr. Rohee is an Executive and Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive and was a former General Secretary. He is the President of the Guyana Peace Council.*

# Restoring Indigenous Pride: Jagan's Legacy

Guyana's cultural diversity is enriched by the indigenous peoples who preceded our arrival on the continent. While it is common to ascribe to our country the emblematic "land of six peoples" definition, in reality, from an anthropological or more specifically an ethnological perspective, our country's human diversity is much more complex. In fact, our population, despite accounting for less than eight hundred thousand derives from a multitude of peoples originating from four continents (Europe, Africa, Asia for those who came, and South America for those who were already here when the New World was "discovered"). And before we even anchored; before we evolved into a Nation-State, this part of the world was already thriving with civilizations rich in cultural and linguistic particularities.

Colonization, however, was not so much the celebration of cultures as it was the instigator of their erosion. Unfortunately, what colonization didn't finish, negligence from the first Government of independent Guyana continued. British Guiana was home to twelve reported and documented indigenous peoples: the Arawak/Lokono, Carib, and Warrau of the Northern coastal regions, the Patamona, Akawaio and Arecuna of the forests and mountainous areas, and the Wai Wai, Macusi, Wapishana, Dorai, Aturai and Taruma of the Rupununi Savannas.

Today, only the first nine nations have survived, although it is reported that the Aturai (locally referred to as 'Aturade') and Taruma peoples have not entirely disappeared since some married into Macusi and Wapishana families of the Rupununi. The establishment of a colony, and later on a newly independent State, came at the expense of indigenous languages, land ownership, customs, ancestral knowledge, and traditional village economies. Subsequently, three indigenous

languages (Warrau, Arawak/Lokono, Carib) are quasi-extinct today, and the magnitude of cultural losses might be difficult to assess due to insufficient documentation, research and knowledge sharing.

It was Steven Campbell, Guyana's first indigenous parliamentarian, who paved the way for indigenous land rights when he traveled to the United Kingdom pre-independence, to petition the Crown on behalf of his people. He secured a commitment that indigenous land rights would be restored once the colony transitioned to an independent State and saw his hard work materialize in the 1966 Independence Act. The Lands Commission Report that resulted was the precept of Amerindian Land Titling which commenced in the late 1970s. However, sluggishness from the Burnhamite regime cobbled with ethnic discrimination and neglect, delayed the titling of indigenous communities while ignoring other fundamental aspects of indigenous cultures, such as language and traditions.

## A time of cultural renewal

It wasn't until the end of the twenty-eight-year reign of the PNC dictatorship (1964-1992) built on ethnic discrimination and political repression and violence, that indigenous rights were finally given space to grow and develop. It was the commencement of a new era, with the late President Cheddi Jagan paving the age of renewal as the country discovered what perhaps can be described as the true beginning of independence from political oppression.

Shortly after winning the October 1992 Elections, the Peoples Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), determined in its commitment to uphold the constitutional rights of indigenous peoples, began a multi-pronged approach which would transform Guyana into a pioneer for indigenous rights in the world. The establishment of a Department of Amerindian Affairs within the Office of the President shortly



*Dr. Jagan with young Amerindian leaders*

after Jagan's election, was a notable manifestation of this political will, and a long overdue one. In 2004, this department evolved to become the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs.

In 1995, Cheddi Jagan designated September as Amerindian Heritage Month and September 10<sup>th</sup> as Heritage Day, in commemoration of Steven Campbell, who on that day became Guyana's first indigenous parliamentarian. Amerindian Heritage Month is the first official demonstration of political commitment to celebrating indigenous peoples while encouraging indigenous pride. For the first time, our nine indigenous nations were offered a platform to showcase their cultures to the rest of the population. This helped tremendously in deconstructing barriers of discrimination, as well as cultural misperceptions. It gave other Guyanese better insight into the cultural wealth that indigenous nations brought to the table, as well as their importance in guarding and preserving

our forests, savannahs and natural resources. For many, it was the elucidation of flawed myths and inaccuracies surrounding indigenous peoples, which, for decades, contributed heavily to their social stigmatization.

### **Placing indigenous land rights at the forefront**

Simultaneously, Dr. Jagan having understood that land rights were intrinsic to the preservation of indigenous peoples worldwide, strengthened land titling procedures to guarantee their access to inalienable and irrevocable land ownership. At a meeting held in Paramakatoi (Region 8) in 1995 and chaired by Dr. Jagan, the concept of demarcation was introduced. Demarcation is the physical delineation (via land survey) of the titled boundaries of a village, after which a Certificate of Title (CoT) is delivered to the Village Council. In South America, this was an avant-gardist initiative, and up to today, Guyana is the only country on the continent which accords indigenous peoples legal

ownership and demarcation of their lands. The first demarcations commenced in 1996. To go further in his administration's resolve to give back to indigenous peoples the lands from which they were deprived, Jagan not only committed to continuing addressing land titling for pending applications, but he gave new communities the opportunity to apply for land titles as well as extensions to already titled and demarcated lands. This new phase to land titling was a major step forward in reassuring indigenous peoples that land rights remained a Government priority, and it is what laid the foundation ten years later for the Amerindian Land Titling Project (ALT) funded by the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).<sup>1</sup> It is the reason, why up to today, indigenous communities guided by the Amerindian Act 6 – 2006, can continue to apply for Absolute Grants (land titles), including for extensions.

### **Inclusive democracy and a vision to transcend generations**

This summit convened with indigenous leaders from around the country in 1995, sent a strong message which indicated that the Government was ready and open for dialogue on matters affecting indigenous rights, even the most challenging, which remains land rights. It was representative of Dr. Jagan's vision for a free and democratic Guyana devoid of ethnic prejudice and in which every individual must be heard. It is from this vision that emerged a flourishing civil sector, which today operates freely without fear of repression or of State control (in contrast with the undemocratic practices of the PNC dictatorship that forced the then few non-governmental organizations to work in a hostile environment and under strenuous circumstances).

So, as Guyana moved away from that dark period of dictatorial rule and morphed into a nascent democracy at the dawn of the 1990s, Dr. Jagan slowly began to restore the trust between

Guyana's First Peoples and the Government. This relationship of trust and cooperation transcended all PPP/C administrations. The basic social welfare infrastructure encompassing health facilities, schools, and community halls in indigenous villages across Guyana was not only a reflection of his belief in human development but also helped to synchronize hinterland development with the rest of the country and subsequently bridge the gaps of social and economic inequalities.

The faith and confidence that Dr. Jagan and his legacy inspired are perhaps one of the determining factors that allowed the PPP/C to be democratically and consecutively re-elected up to 2015. If today Guyana has become a world recognized leader in indigenous affairs, whether, in terms of land rights or legislation, it is because Dr. Jagan tabled the founding policies. If indigenous leaders today can have dialogue and debate their social, economic and political rights nationally and internationally through democratic bodies such as the National Tshaos' Council (NTC), it is thanks to Dr. Jagan and the PPP/C's vision for an inclusive and participative democracy.

As we commemorate Dr. Jagan's birth centenary, we must not forget to remember him as a man of the people, who consecrated his entire life to fighting for and serving all Guyanese impartially and passionately, irrespective of the human diversities which the PNC used to divide us. Though his tenure as President may have been short-lived, his fight for independence and democracy was long, and his impact on our country's social and political development will continue to be remembered as Guyana's first genuine steps of progress.



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# CHEDDI JAGAN AND THE AGRICULTURE REVOLUTION

Even after Guyana's foremost freedom-fighter and liberator, Dr. Cheddi Jagan had been elevated to the highest level of human endeavor – twice, as Head-of-State. His feet remained firmly grounded on the earth that his ancestors worshipped as the giver of all bounties that sustain human life on Planet Earth; hence his persistent drive to ensure food security through his consistent visionary conceptualizations and support for Guyana's agricultural sector.

Both the rice and sugar industries have been – singly and combined, a major mainstay of the national economy under the tenure of PPP/PPPC Governments.

Sadly, each time the PNC-led governments assumed office, these two essential industries – so crucial to Guyana's socio-economic wellbeing and survival, became victims of political vendetta.

Dr. Jagan's visions fructified in, inter-alia, agricultural schemes such as Black Bush Polder, Tapakuma and the Greater Canje projects, West Berbice and East Demerara (MMA) projects, and implementation of a comprehensive drainage and irrigation programme. These initiatives, combined with research and application of best practices in agrarian methodologies, created by Guyana what a Trinidadian journalist described as 'The Food Basket of the Caribbean.'

He promoted local co-operatives for large-scale cultivation, to enhance profitability and reduce overheads for small-scale farmers.

Sadly, under the Burnham-led PNC era, the formerly vibrant rice industry was neglected to the point of collapse, to the extent where the inferior quality of rice for local consumption had to be imported from South-East Asia and Spain, and beet sugar

from Guatemala had to be imported to supply the domestic market.

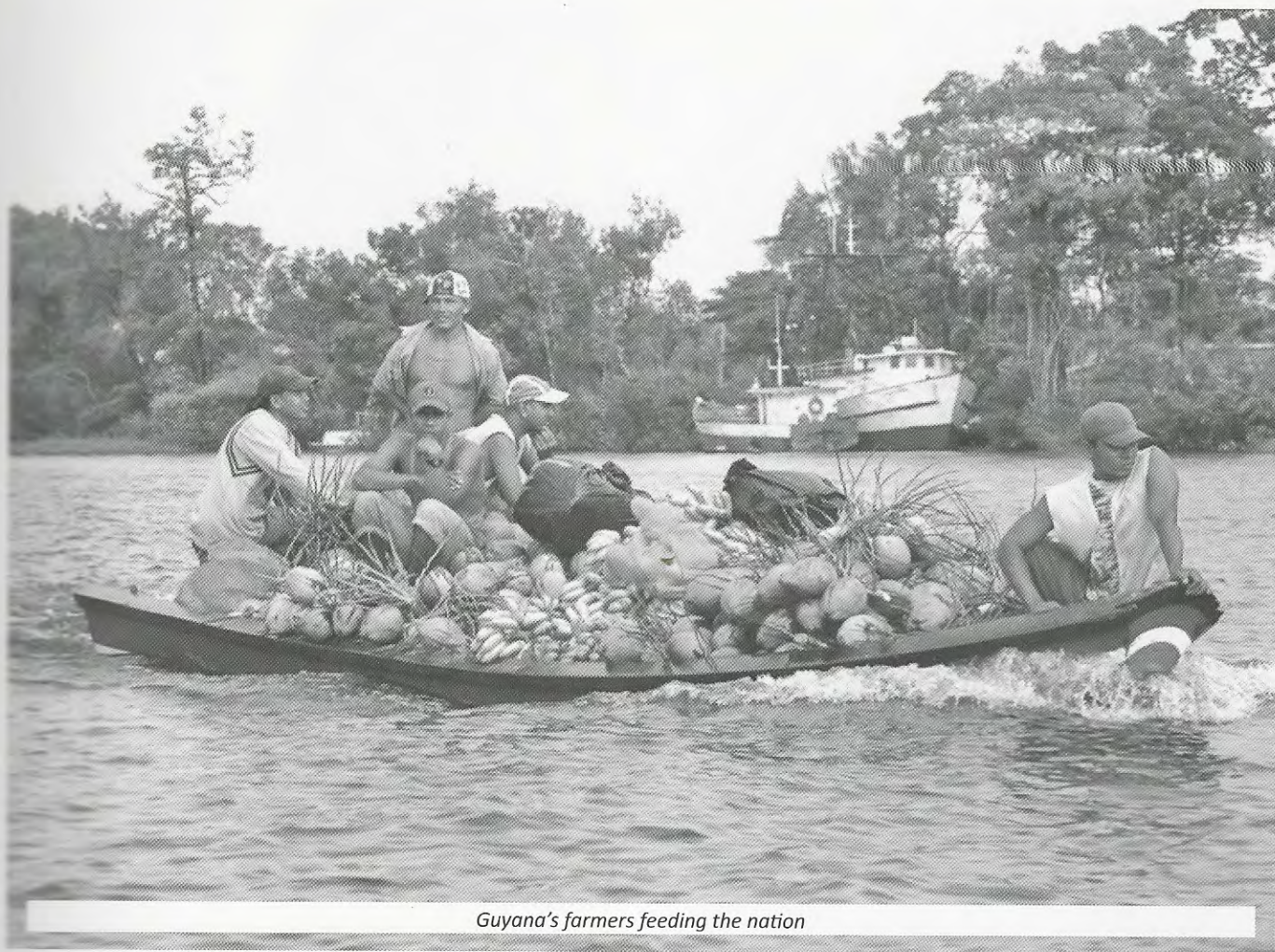
But not even Burnham's PNC administration, although he had vengefully closed the most productive Leonora Estate after someone had reportedly lobbed a rotten egg at him when he held a meeting in that community, had so drastically destroyed the sugar sector as has happened under the Granger/PNC led coalition government.

Persecution during the Burnham era resulted in thousands of rice farmers abandoning the sector and fleeing with their families overseas. Between 1968 and 1980, the number of rice farmers declined from 45,000 to about 23,000. Sugar and rice industries are always targeted, because the employees of these vital sectors were and are perceived to be Cheddi Jagan/PPP supporters, with the skewed rationale that destroying the PPP support base would be destroying the PPP, with scant or no consideration for the negative socio-economic impacts that would redound to the nation.

There was no incentive provided to farmers by the then government to continue rice cultivation. Conversely, the PNC government, on assumption of power, waged a relentless campaign that discouraged farmers, consequently eventuating in a severe contraction of the rice industry.

They first wrested control away from the farmers of the then Rice Marketing Board that had been established under the first Jagan-led PPP government, which eventuated in administrative powers being vested in party bureaucrats who had scant knowledge of or were completely ignorant of, rice production.

Concessions such as duty-free fuel and fertilizers



*Guyana's farmers feeding the nation*

and other enablers and facilities granted to farmers under the PPP administration were all removed. When the farmers peacefully protested the governmental tyranny against them that was imperiling their livelihood and the rice industry as a whole, the police unleashed dogs on them.

The PNC government de-recognized the legitimate representative of rice farmers, the Guyana Rice Producers Association (RPA), and neglected drainage and irrigation systems to the point where these and other actions were perceived as an overt assault on the sector.

The People's Progressive Party, aligned with a Civic component (PPP/C), and led by the indefatigable fighter for the restoration of democracy and human rights in a beleaguered Guyanese nation, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, was victorious in the first in decades, relatively free-and-fair elections on 5th October 1992.

This was truly the dawn of a new era, and he

immediately initiated projects and programmes to enable and facilitate his visionary concepts for a Guyana transformed from a 'basket-case' to a 'bread-basket'; and primary among his transformative initiatives was the restoration of the viability of the agricultural sector, because he has always been conscious of, and recognized the imperative of, food security being the driver of a nation's growth and wellbeing.

As a result of the policies and programmes of the PPP/C Government, and a dynamic drive spearheaded by the RPA and GRDB to expand Guyana's regional and international market share, the farmers returned to the land in droves, achieving incremental annual production that superseded that of each prior year.

Reacting to the climate change phenomenon, the PPPC empowered the GRDB with needs facilitation to research best agronomic practices, and padi strains that were resilient against bug infestation



*Dr Jagan enjoying a home grown coconut*

and erratic weather patterns. Among new varieties that produced higher yields were GRDB 9 and GRDB 10. Staff members were sent overseas for training in research and applications to best agricultural practices.

GRDB also developed blast resistant lines, and thousands of breeding lines were evaluated at different blast prone areas, with hundreds of blast resistant lines identified. After conducting on-farm evaluations, blast resistant lines were released in 1997. These varieties increased national average yields and consequently saved millions of dollars for the control of blast through fungicides.

Field schools for the promotion of best agrarian practices and a productive six-point programme directed and facilitated by the GRDB and RPA proved infinitely successful and to the time the PPPC demitted office in 2015 an unprecedented national average yield of 32 bags per acre was being achieved, as compared to 20 bags per acre in the early 1990s.

Exploration of ventures into diversification and value-added products was stymied by coalition non-support and derailment of the Amaila Hydroelectricity project, which would have provided cheap electricity, thereby reducing overhead costs to the manufacturing sector, and rendering the production of by-products and expanding the then existing product range feasible ventures.

Staying true to the vision of the PPP's Founding-Father, successive PPP/PPPC administrations continued to fully support the agricultural sector; and this country, amid a global recession that forced even First World nations and oil-rich countries into hunger and food-fights, achieved the UN MDG in food security.

Among the multifarious interventions, empowering and facilitating mechanisms provided farmers by successive PPP/PPPC administrations were legislative actions to protect their rights, as well as assistance provided in cash or kind during times of crisis, such as flooding due to erratic weather conditions.

Small farmers' groups were also provided \$220M, \$180M in grants and \$40M in low interest loans through the Rural Enterprise and Agriculture Development (READ) Project and the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF).

Drainage and irrigation needs were also addressed with alacrity and sustainability, and the PPPC government restored duty-free concessions on fuel, fertilizer, agricultural machinery and spares.

Quoting from an interview conducted by the RPA magazine, 'The Farmer', former General-Secretary of that organization, Pariag Sukhai related: *"The rice industry evolved initially by collective community effort which was institutionalized by Dr. Jagan, who had assumed the mantle of Chairman of the RPA, at Vergenoegen, through a system that is still successfully operational until today.*

*The RPA had ostensibly been established to represent the rights of farmers, but it served instead to promulgate the interests of the bureaucracy until 1957 when the farming community rallied under the leadership of Cheddi Jagan and changed the status quo to reflect a more realistic and accurate imprimatur of the organisation's mandate.*

*Since as a boy I had been concerned at the injustices inflicted on rice farmers, and even moreso on the sugar workers, so this dynamic movement by Dr. Cheddi Jagan and the PPP, advocating for workers' rights, provided me with a platform to join in a struggle that provided workers and farmers with a voice.*

*Dr. Cheddi became President of the RPA, and the equation and orientation of the organisation have since been restructured to provide more forceful representation for the rights of the farming community. We traveled from village to village across the country to access the farmers, even in the remotest areas, often at great risk. One moonless*

*night, Hardat Ramnaraine and I nearly drowned in the Essequibo River.*

*The struggle was hard, but we persevered against severe odds. We picketed, we negotiated, we protested, in the streets and in Parliament. We lobbied at national and international fora; but the RPA gradually prevailed, and over the years, farmers have grown to recognize that the RPA is no longer the toothless poodle of yesteryear, but a champion for their cause.*

*This rich legacy of vigorous lobbying and advocating for the farming community continued when I left in 1992. The late Fazal Ally continued the good work until his tragic demise in December 1999, and now the current leadership of the RPA is continuing the tradition of providing valiant and vibrant efforts to ensure that the tradition of committed service to the farming community continues."*



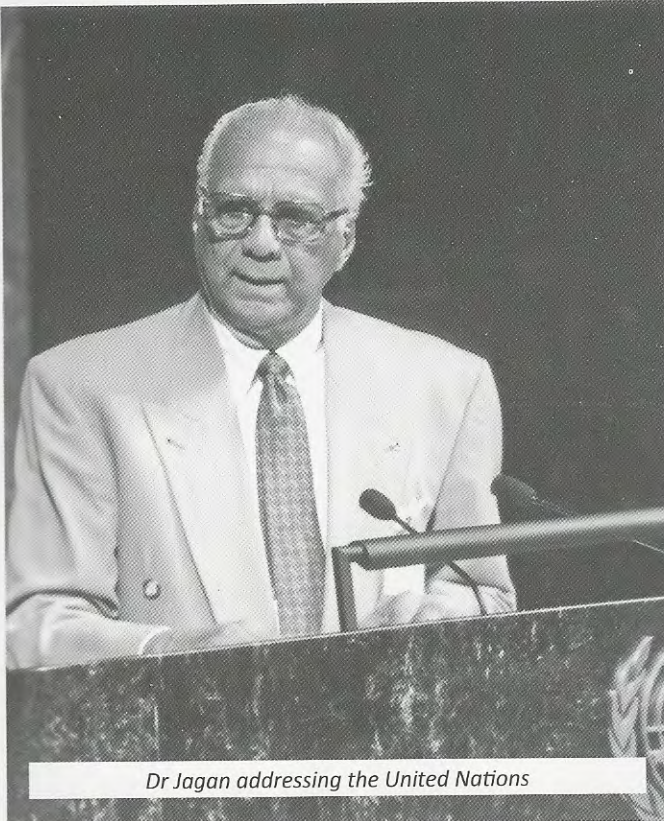
Dr Jagan, former president of the Guyana Rice Producers Association



*Dharamkumar Seeraj is General Secretary of the Guyana Rice Producers Association and a Central and Executive Member of the People's Progressive Party. He is a Member of Parliament. He is a passionate advocate for farmer's rights, in particular rice farmers.*

# DR. CHEDDI JAGAN:

## The Strategic Leader of the 21st Century



*Dr Jagan addressing the United Nations*

The literature on Indo-Caribbean political, economic, and social changes focuses on leaders as being visionary, humanitarian, and charismatic. The strategic leadership dimension of the late President Jagan, however, is not adequately addressed in terms of selecting and implementing strategies to improve the living conditions of Guyanese from the early 1940s to the present. Here, strategic leadership refers to the ability to predict, envision, and empower others to create strategic changes in the interest of all Guyanese. In coping with changes, I categorize Jagan's strategic leadership contributions over three time periods as follows:

- Pre-1964 Colonial British Guiana, as the Premier

- Period 1964-1992, as the Opposition Leader
- Period 1992 to 1997, as the President of Guyana.

### **Pre-1964 Period: Formulation of Independence Strategy**

After his return to Guyana as a young US-trained dentist in 1943, Jagan was appalled at the working and living conditions of Guyanese. The economy was dominated by British MNCs, where inexpensive land-based commodities were exported to Britain in exchange for expensive manufactured products. The goal of private British companies was not to develop the country's social and physical infrastructure, except to remit their profits abroad and maintain a reservoir of surplus labour in substandard housing conditions. Under the then British Guiana, Jagan had no choice but to initiate a strategy of self-determination for Guyanese. His vision was to free Guyana from foreign domination, and then create a united Guyana for the "eradication of poverty." He forged an alliance with Afro leaders (including Burnham) and Indo political activists to form the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), a political organization, to challenge the British Empire. As the first Premier of British Guiana in 1953, Jagan immediately introduced social and economic reforms which angered the then Prime Minister Churchill of Britain. Within 133 days of Jagan's rule, the British suspended Guiana's Constitution on the pretext that Jagan's policy was pro-socialist and contrary to the British interest.

Although he was harassed, imprisoned and house-arrested, Jagan did not abandon his vision of a free and united Guyana. His perseverance, integrity and humanitarian approach to building a just society where everyone can enjoy a decent standard of living won him widebase popular support across all walks of Guyanese. Under these circumstances, he reached

out to the then U.S. President, Kennedy for financial aid in preparation for political independence from Britain. President Kennedy did not deny him such a request. But, unbeknownst to Jagan, after the Jagan-Kennedy meeting, Kennedy set into motion a CIA-led policy of unseating Jagan, from 1957 to 1964. President Kennedy perceived Jagan as pro-socialist and pressured the British to delay political independence under Jagan's administration. During this period of destabilization, Jagan faced two hostile foreign powers: Britain and the US, which together induced divisions between the Indo and Afro political activists, and allowed Burnham to create his political party, PNC, to represent Afro Guyanese. Now, Jagan had to face internal divisions within his political party (PPP) in Guyana, and hostile forces outside of Guyana. Jagan's strategic leadership, in spite of external and internal challenges, paved the way for independence, a significant milestone achievement for Guyana

#### **Period 1964-1992: Cooperative Strategy and Political Alliances**

During the period 1964-1992, the US and Britain engineered electoral reforms in favour of Burnham's political party (PNC) to form the next Government. "Britain has handled us and the question of our independence not in our interest, but in hers;" first, the political alliance between D' Aguiar's Party and Burnham's PNC party in 1964, and second, by subsequent rigged elections, which effectively prevented Jagan from forming the government. According to Jagan in *The West on Trial*, "successive U.S. and U.K. governments have achieved their purpose by force, fraud and rigged elections." As the opposition leader during this period, and despite Burnham's authoritarian rule, Jagan was active in parliament in advocating the cause of a just Guyana. As expected from a strategic leadership role, Jagan offered "critical support" to policies and programs of the ruling administration that were aligned

with his mission of a united Guyana. As predicted, however, the economy under PNC administration experienced negative real GDP growth, high inflation and unemployment, and high foreign debt. Burnham and his administration rigged all general elections from 1968 up to 1992. In the early 1990s, the Cold War was ended, and the hostile US changed its policy towards Jagan.

#### **Period 1992-1997: Implementation of Strategic Leadership**

Immediately after Jagan was sworn in as the first democratic President of Guyana, he implemented a series of actions to achieve his mission of a development strategy. In his New Global Human Order, he placed "great expectations on the private business sector" which was expected to "foster wider citizen participation in basic decisions by enabling local governments, citizens associations, labour unions, farmers' groups and NGOs." His vision of a prosperous Guyana, which started in the early 1940s, shaped his actions of selecting and implementing strategies to invest in human capital. His strategic leadership role in development strategy in this period was not different from what he envisioned when he was the Premier in the then British Guiana. So, the issue is what did Jagan mean by development with pro-socialist policies? Based on his words, examples, and actions over the period 1940-1997, Jagan intended a just society where his Government would channel "much-needed resources into such critical areas as poverty alleviation, rural development, agriculture, health, education and law enforcement." At the end of a prolonged struggle that spanned close to a century, Jagan emerged as the "champion" of the working class, "Father of the Nation," and the strategic leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to pave the way for an independent and democratic Guyana.



Dr. Devindranauth Rawana received his primary and secondary education from Port Mourant in 1972. In the following year, he migrated to Canada where he earned his Ph.D. (McMaster University); M.A.; and B.A (Honors) York University in economics. Upon his return to Guyana in 1993, he was a Senior Research Fellow at IDS, University of Guyana. Currently, he is a Professor of Economics and Statistics at Monroe College in New York, USA. He concentrated his primary research on economic development for immigrant and low-income communities in Urban areas.

# Cheddi Jagan and Women



*Dr. Jagan with wife Janet and two children Nadira and Joey*

It is a distinct honor and privilege to be asked to contribute to this journal which is intended to celebrate the life of one of Guyana's illustrious son Dr. Cheddi Jagan on the occasion of his centenary celebration on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Comrade Cheddi as he is popularly called has been an inspiration to the women of the Party and the Women's Progressive Organization (WPO). The same can be said of those who came in contact with

him. While we all know what a popular person he was, it was in death that we saw the extent of his popularity and the love which people had for him from all walks of life.

His relationship with women in the struggle was premised on his upbringing in which his parents instilled in him strong family values. In conversations about his mother, he refers to those qualities which were responsible for his relationships with his six female siblings which became more apparent when he returned from his studies overseas. Cde. Janet Jagan and his sisters collectively attested to his commitment to his sisters and brothers whom he never hesitated to support in one way or the other.

It was natural for him to have the same regard and respect for the women who were part of the struggle. The naming of a female General Secretary of the Party from the beginning showed the confidence he had for women. Even though Janet was his wife, she was his equal in the struggle since they complemented each other in numerous ways.

Cde. Cheddi as a Marxist recognized the critical role of women in the political and economic struggle of the country thus; every effort was put in place to bring women into the mainstream of political life. The formation of the WPO in 1953 and the naming of three female members of the Legislative Council and the Deputy Speaker in the first PPP government give credence to his respect for women.

Throughout his life, he was able to influence women in all strata of society. While those who were on the opposite side of the fence may negatively speak of him, this changes very quickly when he is in their presence.

Cde Cheddi was blessed with good looks and charm but there was more to him than those attributes. His humility and sincerity come to the fore as he patiently and respectfully interacts with a broad spectrum of people. There are but a few persons who can claim that he has not affected them in one



*Dr. Jagan being garlanded by supporters*

way or the other. As far as we know, whether it was in or out of government, in or out of jail, or in or out of the country, we know that he has left an indelible imprint on them.

The comrades who knew him when he was much younger revered him because of the way in which he dealt with them. He was always willing to listen and to give guidance. He was much loved by the older comrades because they were involved in the struggle with him. He was a very passionate speaker, and it was always amazing to listen to him giving the history and dates of so many different issues. He was a great teacher to the masses of Guyana since he always used any opportunity to educate people about the situation of the given time. There are many stories about his humility when he visited different parts of Guyana and had to stay overnight. Once accommodation was prepared for him he will never say no even though the conditions were not the best.

The younger people who came in contact with him soon recognized the kind of person he was. The women in the struggle treated him with the utmost respect and regard and in many conversations, they

would refer to his personal morality. Never was there a rumor of infidelity. He was the epitome of decency. We loved him because he was always keen on what was happening in the WPO and the welfare of the comrades as well.

As leader of the Party, he spent some of his time, writing on various issues both local and international. He was always on the move, meeting people at formal and informal levels, representing the people in the National Assembly and taking the concerns of the country and people at international fora. Even though busy, he always found time to interact with his comrades in a meaningful way by imbuing them with optimism especially in those 28 long years.

In 1970 he became the General Secretary of the PPP and Cde. Janet was able to take on more work in the WPO since the organization suffered from migration and defection. During this period, she undertook work in various parts of the country, and it was during this period that I had the opportunity of interacting with our leaders in very close proximity.

My whole life changed in a very dramatic way when

as an employee of Freedom House Cde. Cheddi recommended to the Party Education Secretary that I should be sent overseas for political training. This was the precursor to my political life. Similarly, he was instrumental in propelling other comrades to grow. I always remembered the story told to me by Jankie Persaud after the defection of Harry Lall to the People's National Congress (PNC). The story, told by Jankie was as they were traveling in a car from a meeting, he turned to Jankie who was sitting in the back seat and told him that he should consider taking up the position of the President of GAWU. Jankie turned to him and said, "comrade leader I cannot take on that position because I do not have the academic education." Cde. Cheddi said to him "but you understand Trade Union work, and that is important" Jankie in his own words said he was so overwhelmed that his leader had such faith in him even though he was self-taught. This example is an illustration of the confidence he had in his comrades.

In 1976 after the return of some female cadres from overseas Cde. Cheddi in his capacity as the General Secretary of the Party invited a group of women activists and asked us to revitalize the WPO.

I remember him vividly sitting in a very calm and unassuming manner telling us about the role women must play in the political struggle and how he expects us to take on that responsibility; since the Party needs the women of the country to understand what is happening and for more women to come forward and get involved in politics. That call was answered since 1976 and up to this day, the WPO has stayed true to that commitment.

Comrade Cheddi believed in equality, and this was exemplified by the way he lived his life at home. Comrade Janet would refer to the way in which he would take on household responsibilities in washing the dishes, polishing the floor, doing his repairs to his clothes as well as taking on the duties of the

yard.

In all the various periods when he was Leader, General Secretary, Premier, and Leader of the Opposition or President he never failed in his commitment to the WPO; always ensuring that he is present to give the feature address to the Congress and sitting out the first days. He was also very much involved in the observance of International Women's Day celebration.

As a dentist, he ensured that his comrades were looked after free of charge. Similarly, in the days when cars were a luxury, his was used to pick up comrades going to work at Freedom House and all the produce in his garden would be distributed to comrades working there. Even when he traveled overseas, he would always ensure that the comrades at Freedom House will get something when he came back. These characteristics speak to a man who cared about others.

As a politician, he encouraged people to speak up even though their views may not coincide with his. He believed in free speech once you are prepared to defend that position by putting up the relevant arguments. He did not relish the yes man syndrome and liked people who were prepared to stand up and defend positions. In short, he loved people with political acumen and stamina.

As we observe the hundredth birth anniversary of a great Guyanese son of the soil, who came from the bowels of the sugar workers we do so knowing that Guyana has become a better place because of the struggle he waged against the British colonialists. Even though he did not live long enough to take the PPP/C into a second term, we feel satisfied that his stewardship in the first term and the foundation he laid was able to propel Guyana into a country that was on the move. It is hoped that the younger generation who will inherit this great land will always remember his legacy.



*Indranie Chandarpal is the President of the Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO) and Member of the Central Committee of the People's Progressive Party. She is also Chairperson of the Women and Gender Equality Commission. She is a Member of Parliament and a former Minister of Human Services, Labour and Social Security. Also President of the Inter American Commission on Women. Currently Administrator of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre.*

# POLITICAL ENGINEERING OR SOCIAL HEALING?

*Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice: It is not a thing to be waited for: It is a thing to be achieved.*

William Jennings Bryan

The world over, great minds campaign to change unjust systems or to support a cause that they feel strongly about. In Guyana, Dr. Jagan was one such person. Throughout his life, he fought to create a better world for each and every Guyanese and, in so doing, he made a tremendous contribution to this nation's history.

It is a supreme test of man's character to overcome trials of adversity and disaster. This Dr. Jagan understood only too well, for his life was a compelling statement of struggle, first as a child, then as a student, as a nationalist, and finally as the esteemed elder statesman. Nation building, we now know, is a never-ending series of difficult tasks each stage seemingly more complicated than the one just completed.

In the hostile colonial environment in which the natural progression of his country was first frustrated and subsequently truncated by the Anglo American Alliance, Dr. Jagan endured absolute despair, yet he was forever optimistic, prophetically reminding us that 'History and time are on our side.'

Dr. Jagan is now widely regarded as the Father of our Nation. He moulded our political consciousness. His life was an unswerving dedication to the nation. In the face of grave difficulties, he always championed the cause of national unity, economic progress, and social justice. He was the quintessence of consistency, a nationalist, regionalist and internationalist in every sense of the word.

Someone once wrote that Dr. Jagan's philosophical ideas and political actions constituted the foundation on which this nation was originally conceptualized. They were the wellspring, the very

seminal essence of the great man. Every Guyanese, great or small, understood where Dr. Jagan stood. They knew that he felt their pain and their hunger, that he shared their hopes and aspirations, and that he was committed to creating a better Guyana for them, their children and their children's children. A society in which all were equal and were treated as equals. A society in which there was a place for the fullest development of their peculiar attributes. In Guyana, Dr. Jagan was the most powerful voice for the poor, the dispossessed, and indeed, **'the wretched of the earth.'**

There are undoubtedly many things about Dr. Jagan that one might choose to write on at a moment and occasion such as this. There is firstly the man himself: resolute, committed, honest and compassionate. Then there is the reflective scholar, forever thinking, analyzing, discussing and writing. There is also the nationalist firebrand, ever championing the cause of the anti-imperialist struggle abroad and the national liberation campaign at home. There was, as well, the compassionate internationalist stridently advocating the cause of the dispossessed the world over.

This article, brief though it is, will address the committed nationalist politician, and in so doing, focus on his consistent preoccupation with national unity. Dr. Jagan truly believed in national unity as the primary means of attaining peace, progress, and prosperity, and he never stopped searching for ways and means of moulding the classes and races into a strong united front.

On careful reflection, it can be said that the political career of Dr. Jagan spanned three distinct periods. Firstly, from the 1940s to 1964, when he was the



*Dr. Jagan greeting Drs. Walter Rodney and Rupert Roopnarine*

fearless anti-colonial firebrand, the nationalist and the liberator. Secondly, there is the period between 1964 and 1992, when he struggled against the notorious tyranny of the People's National Congress [PNC] dictatorship. Attempting, time and again, to mold a truly broad-based consensus against the perpetrators of the worst forms of political depredations at home. And finally, the all too brief post-1992 period, when having triumphed over the mindless tyranny of the PNC, he attempted to reignite the process of community healing and national reconstruction.

In each, he played a different role, which not surprisingly coincided with the different manifestations of the dilemma he and this country were experiencing. Irrespective of the adversity surrounding him, and throughout it all, he remained the committed and resolute Cheddi Jagan.

Explicitly, I choose to begin at the beginning. In October 1943 Dr. Jagan returned to his homeland and almost immediately gravitated into local politics. He became increasingly interested in trade union activities and also in the roles and functions of organizations such as the League of Coloured

Peoples [LCP] and the British Guiana East Indian Association [BGEIA].

The skeptic has been heard to remark that, given his Marxist orientation, this was inevitable. Even had this been so, the concern here is not so much with the organizational frames of reference, but with their constituent membership. For instance, while it is true that Dr. Jagan was now located in the city, there is still the need to explain his initial involvement in urban politics. For one thing, he was a rural lad; his connections were rural, and so one would immediately assume would have been his constituency and his immediate concerns. For another, poverty and disaffection were almost as marked in rural Guyana as they were manifest in the city. Thirdly, given the above, even a peripheral rural political engagement would have been perceived as an easier entre to anti-colonial politicking than an inner city base.

What is of similar concern, and needs to be noted as well, was the fact that he seemed always to prefer grounding with multi-ethnic, multi-racial gatherings and organizations. Increasingly, it became clear that Dr. Jagan was, from the very inception, expressing

a clear and definitive preference for multi-ethnic politics. This preference was further borne out when, of all the Indian anti-colonial advocates at the time, he was the only one who did not attempt to expressly explain the inadequacies of the 1944 Franchise Commission Report in solely ethnic terms: this was significant.

Between 1944 and 1947, the refusal of the conservative political elite to concede adult franchise in the wake of the 1939 West Indian Royal Commission Report, especially their insistence on retaining the anti-Indian literacy test, provided every Indian politician with an understandable racial platform. Jagan eschewed this inviting pitfall, concentrating on more germane issues, which led to his winning the Central Demerara constituency.

Further, in 1946, rather than joining with the East Indian Association and exploiting the aggrieved Indian's case, he chose to form the Political Affairs Committee [PAC], a multi-ethnic organization dedicated to the formation of a socialist political party. Four years later, he might have been forgiven had he opposed, the as yet untried, Forbes Burnham as Chairman of the about to be formed Peoples Progressive Party [PPP]. After all, within a certain definition, Ashton Chase's claim was by far a more legitimate and popular one.

The issue here, however, was the Georgetown constituency. Burnham enjoyed the support of the Georgetown political machine of the time, and Jagan was even then, concentrating on the coalition of the racial forces in the colony. Using the leverage produced by this new multiracial combination, they were able to win adult suffrage and an advanced constitution when the British Guiana Constitutional [Waddington] Commission visited in 1950-51. This opened the way for genuinely popular politics in the colony, and for the effective actualization of a mass-based political party. The PPP was such a party, and so was successful at the 1953 elections. The lessons of ethnic unity had been learned, and Jagan was not ever a forgetful politician.

In spite of this very strong and very influential coalition, the British Government was able to oust the PPP administration from office and install an interim government comprising entirely of nominated members, most of whom had been rejected at the 1953 polls. This development was

indeed a tremendous blow to Dr. Jagan and the nationalist movement.

In 1955, and again in 1956, Dr. Jagan suffered severe setbacks when the nationalist movement fractured twice along lines favoured by the 1954 British Guiana Constitutional [Robertson] Commission. Jagan feared the worst, and his worst fears were justified. And these fears prompted him to become even more devoted to the cause of national unity. The All-Party Committee formed in 1957 was a case in point. This unlikely coalition was successfully engineered to protest the inadequacies of Governor Patrick Renison's 1956 Constitutional Proposals and the prolongation of the State of Emergency in the colony. The 'coalition,' eventually failed because Whitehall, as was their fashion, convinced most of the politically ambitious, of whom there were many, that it made better political sense to oppose Dr. Jagan than to work with him in pursuance of the anti-colonial objective.

The All-Party Committee never anticipated contesting the election as a group, and so Dr. Jagan led the PPP to successive electoral victories in 1957 and again in 1961, and for a time seemed certain to lead the country to political independence. As was his custom, he again seized every opportunity to advocate the cause of national unity. In spite of his efforts, the many weaknesses of the fractured nationalist movement were easily exploited, creating conditions favourable for a civil war in 1963. At this juncture, all seemed lost, and Dr. Jagan might have been forgiven had he lost faith in ever cementing another effective nationalist coalition. But given the trauma of 1963, Dr. Jagan wrote to Mr. Burnham on the very eve of the 1964 elections

***You would be aware that it has been my wish since the split of the People's Progressive Party in 1955 that a merger or a coalition of the two parties representing the majority of the working people should take place. Unfortunately, my previous efforts have failed to bring about a merger or a coalition government. I know you will agree with me when I say that the situation has now deteriorated to such a point that something dramatic must be done to prevent further racial strife between the two major ethnic groups,***

***to unite the working class, and to create a stable and strong government.***

***I propose, therefore, to invite you to join me in the formation of a coalition government between the People's Progressive Party and the People's National Congress***

Jagan's timing was off, as the Anglo-American Axis had other plans for Burnham. Utilizing a conveniently new constitutional arrangement, the PPP was displaced by a coalition of a different kind consisting of the PNC and the United Force [UF] at the 1964 elections. Burnham was tasting power for the first time, and, unlike Jagan, was not inclined to share his coveted prize.

From then on, Dr. Jagan, through the consistent connivance of the Anglo-American Alliance, languished in the wilderness of the parliamentary opposition for twenty-eight years. Successively, he was the victim of perversely controversial elections. But the long years in opposition brought out the inner steel in Dr. Jagan, particularly in commitment, resolve and dedication. In spite of tremendous odds, he kept the party together, consolidated its ranks, all the while advocating in one form or another cross-party unity.

The Burnham administration found democratic forms of governance a serious challenge, and by 1968 began to demonstrate signs of incipient autocracy. It abandoned its unholy concubinage with the United Force, thumbed its nose at its prime sponsor, the United States of America, and began to propagate the notion that it was Marxist-Leninist. Further, it announced that it was prepared to take control of the commanding heights of the economy, beginning with bauxite and then sugar, both of which were promptly nationalized. Promulgating a socialist economic policy, Burnham angered both the US and the UK and bereft of its American *patron*, Guyana was soon confronted by Venezuela and then Brazil, both threatening its territorial integrity.

The 1970s were turbulent but remarkable times.

In 1971 there was an attempt to assassinate university lecturer Dr. Joshua Ramsammy, who headed a politically militant group known as the Movement Against Oppression [MAO]. The Working People's Alliance (WPA) mounted an impactful protest campaign against the PNC, which attracted militants from all walks of life and especially the young, the brave and the concerned. Then, in 1974, the Board of Governors of the University of Guyana refused to confirm the appointment of



*Dr. Jagan and Mr. Forbes Burnham in deep conversation*

Walter Rodney as professor of history. In sum, the conditions were favourable for a coming together of all the progressive forces against an uncaring and unfeeling administration, and when ASCRIA invited the PPP to participate in joint protest meetings, Jagan was quick to accept.

The PNC saw this new development as one which could lead to the creation of a broad, united front, linking together not only the different ethnic groups, but also the workers, farmers, and intelligentsia. Historically, it was a supreme irony that the Burnham administration found itself politically isolated at a time when national unity was critical. The territorial integrity of Guyana was threatened by its two big neighbours. It was the time of the intensification of the Venezuelan claim to Guyanese territory in Essequibo, and there were frequent reports of Venezuelan and Brazilian military manoeuvres in the border regions.

In consideration of the PNC's anti-imperialist gestures, and more particularly in anticipation of destabilization attempts by Britain, the United States of America, Venezuela, and Brazil, the PPP at its 25th Anniversary Conference in August 1975 at Annandale volunteered "critical support" for the government. The Party reasoned that in such times it was its patriotic duty to stand with the Government in defending the national interests.

In a report to the conference, Dr. Cheddi Jagan made it clear that "critical support" did not mean joining the PNC and supporting the Burnham government, in spite of its manifold indiscretions. He declared:

***It means giving support for any progressive measure, opposing any reactionary moves, and criticising all shortcomings. Above all, it means giving a firm message to imperialism and its lackeys that we will not tolerate any meddling in our domestic affairs, that despite the differences between the PPP and the government, we are prepared to unite our forces with the PNC forces to fight against intervention so as to safeguard our national independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.***

The PPP offer of "critical support" was also meant to show that it intended to display its patriotic duty to stand in defence of the nation's territorial integrity, and to struggle against any pro-imperialist

destabilising forces threatening the country's territorial integrity. Throughout this period, the administration hinted that Brazilian military forces were amassing on Guyana's border to the south, posing a real threat to Guyana. There were genuine fears that Brazil was intent on staging a military intervention on Guyana's southern border to force the PNC to reverse its pro-socialist tendency. All too briefly, national unity in Guyana seemed a genuine possibility.

Indeed, in May 1976, Dr. Jagan and Mr. Burnham appeared on the same May Day TUC platform, where Dr. Jagan openly pledged the support of the PPP against all forms of hostile antinational aggression. Later in the year unity talks began but were immediately jettisoned when the PNC accused the PPP of bad faith. The PPP's offer of support was more critical than support.

In spite of the 1976 reversal, the PPP, in 1977, once again presented concrete proposals, this time for the formation of a National Patriotic Front Government. True to form, Mr. Burnham was not at peace with the proposal, claiming this time that it lacked a socialist orientation, based as it was on ethnicity rather than class. A few years later, and confident that he could count on the enthusiasm and commitment of Dr. Jagan, the two leaders were once again meeting, ostensibly in secret, to agree on a Burnham proposal for power sharing. Unfortunately, Mr. Burnham died before much could be achieved.

Dr. Jagan did not lose heart. It was mainly through his efforts that the Patriotic Coalition for Democracy (PCD) was formed following the rigged elections of 1985. The PCD included the PPP, Working People's Alliance, Democratic Labour Movement, People's Democratic Movement and the National Democratic Front. But if this was a coalition of political parties, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana [FITUG] was not. This umbrella organization included, among others, the Clerical and Commercial Workers Union, [CCWU], University of Guyana Staff Association [UGSA], NAACIE, Guyana Agricultural Workers Union [GAWU] and eventually the Guyana Public Service Union [GPSU]. FITUG was a powerful coalition in terms of working class solidarity across ethnic lines, and Dr. Jagan was enthusiastic of its role/function in the moulding of a new political culture for Guyana.



*Dr. Jagan in discussion with university academics from l-r: Drs. Perry Mars, James Rose, Winston McGowan and Theo Morris*

The militancy and resolve of these organizations, the PCD and FITUG, working along with Dr. Jagan and other like-minded individuals and organisations eventually led to significant electoral reforms which paved the way for eventual restoration of democracy in Guyana. In this, as in so many others, Dr. Jagan was absolutely correct. His confidence, commitment, and doggedness had at last borne fruit. So too was his belief that in unity the Guyanese people could triumph over any and all adversity.

But, even then, Dr. Jagan did not suspend his abiding fervour for national consensus, and so in the early 1990s, he willingly engaged in dialogue with Guyanese Action for Reform and Democracy (GUARD), leading eventually to the formation of the PPP-Civic Grouping which took office in 1992.

But even this coalition, successful as it has been, did not completely satisfy Dr. Jagan's appetite for national unity, and so by 1994, he was again discussing, with patriots and supporters, ways and means of broadening and deepening this coalition. Sadly, he died before his latest initiative had borne fruit.

There are those, like Dr. Jagan, who believe that national unity can be achieved through the welding

of formal organisations, and there are those who believe that national unity can only be achieved through a nurturing process. Diversity, they argue, must be recognized, accepted, appreciated and respected, failing which there will be a lack of trust, the fundamental prerequisite of unity. This respect and trust must be cultivated, nurtured, lived, experienced, promoted and protected. This is not a legislative process, neither is it an organizational norm, it is a socializing process. It should begin at an early age and be nurtured through the succeeding stages of physical, mental and emotional development.

Most of us ***sleep to dream***. Dr. Jagan, it would seem, belonged to that rare group of distinguished minds ***who dream to change the world***. The critical issue, therefore, must be the continuing quest for national unity. Certainly, if we are convinced that Dr. Jagan deserves our adulation, and I am convinced that we do, then certainly we owe it to his memory to redouble our efforts to ensure that national unity enjoys the type of paramountcy he would have preferred.



*Professor James Rose is a renowned Historian and former Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana. He was a Director of the Department of Culture. Professor Rose is also the author of several publications. He was the Chairman for a number of years at the National Trust of Guyana.*

# Cheddi Jagan:

## The Working People's Leader



*Dr. Jagan speaking at GAWU rally*

I was indeed pleased to have been asked to write this article as we remember Dr. Cheddi Jagan on his centennial birth anniversary. For me, it was a pleasure to join the other esteemed contributors as together we reflected on the numerous contributions made by Cde Cheddi during his lifetime and to speak to his enduring legacy. For me, I believe I am lucky to have had the opportunity to work alongside Cde. Cheddi for many years, and got to see up close his unwavering commitment to improving and advancing the interests of the

Guyanese working-people.

Cheddi's long march from Port Mourant, a small rural village in the eastern part of Guyana, to become the first freely elected President of Guyana, until his return to Port Mourant where he was cremated, spanned half of a century. During that period, he did what few men have done in their lifetime: he committed himself to a single goal of freedom for his country and people, and never, even for once, wavered. In many ways, his struggles



*Cheddi Jagan addressing workers at Bourda Green, Georgetown after the shooting of sugar workers at Plantation Enmore in 1948.*

and his accomplishments are so intertwined with the history of his nation that sometimes it is difficult to study one without the other. Having dominated so much of Guyana's post World War II history, he perhaps contradicted his view that history is not made by individuals but by the people. But that is only seemingly so. In fact, he was the embodiment of the people's struggles. He became their most ardent defender, teacher, and organizer. He never marched alone, and that is perhaps the singular reason for his success. He captured their basic interests in his programmatic platforms and defended these with a missionary zeal unmatched by anyone in the last hundred years in Guyana. The same way he became their hope for liberation, similarly he was their conscience. He was always there when the people needed him most, and they put their faith in him, as they knew he would never betray the cause. Today, twenty-one (21) years after this Guyanese hero passed away; his countrymen continue to

be inspired by his lifelong example of struggles, steadfastness, honesty, and incorruptibility. This is perhaps what he wanted. All of his life, he was obsessed with this passion to convince others, to understand the reasons for their bondage, and for people to immerse themselves in liberating ideas. He knew that his people, having been brutalized under slavery and indentureship, must first free themselves and have hope in themselves. Only then can they liberate their country from slavery, bondage and economic backwardness. He has inspired his people to struggle for freedom, to live lives of honesty, and to persist in achieving lofty goals in their personal lives and for the country. Today, as we look back, we ask ourselves: What manner of man was this? What soul was it that went out there to do battle, sometimes single-handedly, with the mightiest of powers in the world? From whence came that inner strength to resist pain and injustice done to him and his people?

Cheddi Jagan was brought up on a sugar plantation. His parents came to Guyana as children of indentured immigrants from India at the turn of the century. Those were hard days in the plantations. His parents began working on the backdam at an early age to assist with the family income. In fact, there was nothing else to do for the children of poor immigrants. At the time of his birth on March 22, 1918, the probability that he would have had any educational opportunity was almost non-existent. As he explained in his *West on Trial*, *"The planters frowned upon education because they held the view that an educated worker would soon become dissatisfied with his status as an agricultural labourer. What they needed above all was a cheap and abundant supply of agricultural labourers."*

Cheddi went to primary school and, like most country boys lived and experienced a childhood of intense poverty – the height of satisfaction being the Saturday night treat of sardines and biscuits. His entrance into a secondary school was a significant sacrifice on the part of his parents – fees were high. This experience led him in later years to introduce free secondary education throughout the country. A major turn in his life came when his parents decided to send him to Queen's College, the premier secondary school in Georgetown. His student life in the city led him to a keener understanding of class divisions. As he put it later, in analyzing the impact of sugar on life in Guyana, *"the plantation was a world of its own. Or rather it was two worlds: the world of exploiters and the world of exploited; the world of whites and the world of non-whites."*

Cheddi completed his studies in Georgetown and had hoped, at best, for a civil service job in Georgetown. But even this did not come his way. He tried to land a job for a year but could find none. He could have entered the teaching service, but first, he had to become a Christian: his parents would have none of that. The idea of studies overseas was aroused by friends, and in 1936, at the age of eighteen; he traveled to the United States, where he spent seven years - two in Washington and five in Chicago.

Those were seven critical years in the life of Cheddi Jagan, and in many ways were responsible for him becoming such a consummate politician – a man with a mission. It is not without significance that in the chapter of his *West on Trial* on his years in

the USA, he quoted these lines from the United States Declaration of Independence: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."* Throughout his political career, he was to refer, with great admiration, to the experience of the American Revolution, the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, and his experience in the United States, especially the years of the depression and Roosevelt's New Deal. Up until the time of his death, he was to draw from this experience. In his advocacy for a New Global Human Order, he had proposed that a special *"peace dividend"* established from savings made from cuts in arms spending, be used, as Roosevelt had done under his New Deal Administration, to embark on a Works Programme for physical and social and cultural infrastructure in the poorer countries.

In America, he was to observe the prevalence of racial inequality and had experienced forms of racism himself. He also saw the great disparity in living standards between whites and non-whites. While studying, because he had no support from anywhere, he was forced to work in restaurants, as a tailor, salesman, and elevator operator. It was during these stints that he was to get a better understanding of America and it aroused an even deeper urge to understand the real world around him. He became interested in politics, followed events during the war, and studied social sciences. In 1943, he received a degree in dental surgery from Northwestern University and a BSc from the YMCA College in Chicago.

Cheddi's worldview was emerging based on sincere sympathies for the working man and the desire to see him live a better life. In a letter he wrote in 1942 to his good and constant friend Dr. Orrin Dummett, with whom he left Guyana to study abroad, he remarked:- *"...[n]ow is the time for all suppressed and minority groups to demand not only theoretical but also practical equality so that the common foe will be resisted by all on an equal footing... [h]istory is in the making – whether anyone likes it or not. There has been an awakening – the status quo that was, is gone. Yes, now is the time for us to organize, to lobby, to make propaganda and demands - for now, changes can be most rapid and to our benefit."* Cheddi returned to Guyana in 1943, and he established his practice in Georgetown. His low fees were not to the liking of the Dental Association,

which had prescribed for example a minimum fee for extractions, that was higher than what he was charging. Although he liked his profession, at the same time he longed to identify himself with something more meaningful. In those days, there were no political parties. The planter class dominated the Legislative Council, and though some union leaders such as Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, who formed the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU) in 1922, spoke in the Legislative Council on behalf of workers, they had no mass political organization. In existence then were the League of Coloured People and the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA). The LCP did not interest him much since they opposed adult suffrage. The BGEIA supported constitutional changes and universal adult suffrage but was unsympathetic to the plight of the working man.

The dental surgery became a hive of activities, and through it, Cde. Cheddi made many important contacts, many patients being ordinary rural and urban workers. Cheddi's name began to spread in the sugar belt – coming from a sugar estate and being a doctor who listened to ordinary people. On many occasions, he would be invited by workers to speak and advise them on industrial matters in various parts of the sugar belt. Due to his increased contacts with workers, he became involved in the two trade unions in the sugar industry, one of them being the Man-Power Citizen's Association (MPCA). In 1945 he became treasurer of that union but was removed after a year when he objected to the glaring reluctance of the union to defend the interests of the sugar workers. It was, he discovered, a company union. Those were the days when many things were happening. The Royal Commission on the West Indies, headed by Lord Moyne, had published its report, which horrified many as it related in concrete terms the miserable conditions of the workers and farmers. The war had created its difficulties in Guyana and the region. Those difficulties had stirred widespread debate in which Cheddi and his wife, Cde Janet Jagan, took an active part. He used to take part in discussions over a wide range of subjects at the Carnegie (now National) Library. A significant event in that year was the convening in Georgetown of West Indian Conference attended by such leaders as Grantley Adams, of Barbados, Norman Manley and Richard Hart of Jamaica, Albert Gomes of Trinidad, and H.N. Critchlow of Guyana. The Labour Party had just won the elections in England, and many were openly

talking of socialism. H.J.M Hubbard, an avowed Marxist, was at the time the General Secretary of the British Guiana Trades Union Council.

In 1946, Hubbard, Ashton Chase assistant secretary in the British Guiana Labour Union, Cheddi and Janet Jagan formed the Political Affairs Committee. The PAC was labour oriented. And all four leaders were working in trade unions. In 1947, the first elections since World War II were held. There were 14 elected seats to be contested. Apart from the middle-class organizations, the LCP and the BGEIA, a Labour Party was formed, but this organization was a group of individuals put together quickly and without any mass base. Cheddi contested on the East Coast of Demerara and fought against some well-established people, such as Frank Jacobs, a lawyer, and John D'Aguiar. The latter was undoubtedly the most powerful, as he had represented the constituency for some time, was wealthy, and had enormous influence. Cheddi had worked among the sugar workers for some time and was assisted by Eusi Kwayana (Sidney King) and Ram Karran who lived in the constituency. His patience and dedicated work among the workers paid off. At the end of the count, Cheddi was declared the winner. Many in later years, he described this victory as a turning point for Cheddi, and in many ways, it was a significant event in the history of Guyana. Cheddi himself reflected later that getting into the legislature was an end of sorts but *"only the beginning of the long and hard struggle ahead."* Cheddi was elated. He was never to forget in his entire life that it was the workers who elected him and elected him because of the promises he made to them. That he would take their cause to the legislature. He said as much in a post-ballot speech when he declared, *"We the people have won. Now the struggle will begin."* Forty-five years later, at another historic occasion, his swearing in as the first freely elected President of Guyana in 1992, he was to repeat those same words *"...we the people have won."*

From then on the legislature became a battleground. Cheddi soon mastered the art of debate in Parliament and prepared himself well before each sitting. He would constantly expose the exploitative nature of the colonial rulers and dominance of the Bookers group - Guyana was then known as Bookers Guiana. He exposed the alarmingly poor conditions of the people and the fact that the legislature was merely a tool of the planters. What was also significant was that, during this period, it became



Dr. Jagan addressing a village meeting

clear that he, unlike other legislators who claimed to speak for the masses, was not for sale. His name as an honest politician, a man of integrity grew from that time on.

A different kind of politics was taking shape. Cheddi would take the interest of the ordinary man into the legislature, and would later take to the street corners to expose the rulers and their ploys to continue to exploit the people. In the legislature, for a while, he teamed up with the Labour Party which had won six of the fourteen seats, but soon broke ranks when he found they were not willing to speak out against the planters, and would not oppose the various manipulations used by the colonialists to remove the wealth created by the people out of the country.

As conditions worsened in the colony, the industrial struggles began to intensify. As part of his efforts to organize a mass-based national movement, he moved even closer to the trade unions. Cheddi agitated among workers and became President

of the Sawmill Workers Union. The colonial government became more oppressive, and the need for a national political organization became more pressing. Matters came to a head when, in 1948, during a strike at Enmore estate, sugar workers were gunned down by the colonial police. This tragedy sent shock waves throughout the colony. Cheddi described the incident thus: *"The Enmore tragedy affected me greatly. I was personally acquainted with all the young men killed and injured. The funeral procession headed by my wife, other leaders and myself to the city 16 miles away became a mass protest demonstration. At the graveside, the emotional outburst of the widows and relatives of the deceased had been intensely distressing, and I could hardly restrain my tears. There was to be no turning back. There and then I took a silent pledge – I would dedicate my entire life to the cause of the struggle of the Guyanese people against bondage and exploitation."*

The stage was set to carry out the objective set by the PAC – the formation of a political party. And

so in 1950 was founded the People's Progressive Party, with Forbes Burnham as Chairman, Cheddi as Leader, and Janet Jagan as General Secretary.

From its inception, the colonialists attacked the Party, but a clear focus was on the 1953 general elections. For the first time, people came out in numbers to demand a better deal and against the colonial masters in an organized way. At the end of the polls, the PPP won 18 of the 24 seats. It was a resounding victory. The PPP had succeeded in rallying all sections of the population to stand up for a free Guiana. The new government was formed, headed by Cheddi as Chief Minister. Real power, however, continued to reside in the hands of the British. In spite of constitutional limitations, the government introduced progressive measures to ease the plight of the working people. These changes seemed modest, given the many demands of the people, but these drove fear in the British. Every move was deemed communist by the British and local reaction. The planters were angered when the Labour Relations Bill was introduced. It was fashioned after American and Canadian legislation that provided a poll to determine the union of the workers' choice. Big business opposed the action since they were in favour of company unions, which betrayed the cause of labour. It became very clear that the British were not prepared to allow the PPP to govern. Thus, the British sent troops into Guyana, suspended the constitution, dismissed the government, and created a nominated legislative council made up mainly of stooges who were rejected by the people at the polls. Cheddi recorded this episode thus: *"Our 133 days in office had demonstrated our concept of democracy. Now the British and our opponents in Guiana demonstrated theirs."* Incidentally, the Americans gave their blessings to the British gunboat action.

A wave of terror against the PPP, its leaders and the working people ensued. Cheddi's movements were restricted. As part of the Party's civil disobedience campaign, he broke the restriction order by the colonialists, was arrested and sent to jail for six months. But not before he had his say in the dock. *"Today...Guyana is a vast prison. Whether I am outside or inside matters little. Prisons hold no terror for me. I expect no justice from this or any other Court. Justice has been dead since the British troops landed. I am hoping for the day when there will be greater justice in Guiana."*

At this juncture, Guyana experienced a bitter period in its history, and many of our current problems can find their roots in the sad days of British occupation. The British used all their experience at subversion and division to maintain their rule. They did everything possible to break the PPP and its mass support. And there were many willing opportunists of the local brand ready to do their bidding. The most significant success of the British was the split in the PPP in 1955. When the British thought they had everything under control and had manipulated the constituency boundaries, they held general elections in 1957. The results astonished them and proved to all who had the support of the people. The PPP won nine of the fourteen seats, the PNC three. In fact, the votes received by Cheddi were more than the combined support of the five opposition seats.

The fight for Guyana's independence remained the core objective of the People's Progressive Party. In its founding manifesto, the struggle for independence from British rule was adumbrated as the objective of the party. It was the first time that a political party in Guyana had set itself such a goal. The PPP actively promoted the cause, and organized support inside and outside the country to achieve this end. The British and local reaction rallied to stop the march for independence. The communist bogey was always used as a pretext, but the PPP went on to win the successive elections. The British granted independence to Guyana in 1966. It was a proud moment for Cheddi, and though he was now in the opposition, he was considered as the father of the independence struggles. He warned, however, that while we took pride in nationhood, the road Burnham had taken, and the divisions in the society, would lead to further impoverishment.

For twenty-eight years, Cheddi Jagan and the PPP were in the opposition. He confronted the regime and campaigned at home and abroad for democracy, peace, progress, and harmony in Guyana. Due to his consistent efforts, a growing unity was developing in the country for the restoration of democracy. This process was helped by the good work of former President Jimmy Carter. Many believed that the PPP was dead and Jagan would never come back. But as he did in the past, he confounded his detractors and led the polls in 1992. After twenty-eight years of dedicated work, Cheddi was declared first freely

elected President of Guyana.

In his fifty years of struggles, Cheddi travelled and mingled with the highest and the lowest. He dined with kings and presidents and also felt comfortable at the table of the humblest worker. He was a man of the people. In Guyana, he has earned for himself the honour of being called the Father of the Nation. Today as we celebrate his life and times, it is necessary for us to focus on his main contributions to Guyana, those aspects of his legacy, which will live on and inspire others to follow his footsteps. First, he was a man committed to his country and people. His goal in life was to bring freedom and equality and prosperity to the Guyanese people. He was a political leader, teacher, and organizer of the working classes. He believed in national liberation, was a staunch fighter in the fight against colonialism, and was an internationalist, joining the fight against injustice and poverty all over the world.

In his later years, especially as President of Guyana, three crucial issues were central to his work: the achievement of economic growth, and human development and national unity. In his analysis, this was the critical damage done to the country by the colonialists and the PNC regime. During his four and a half years as Head of State, Cheddi had proposed a profound vision for Guyana, and had outlined his basic worldview in many of his speeches and writings, which have been published over the years, the latest being *"A New Global Human Order."*

Cheddi was a humble man of no pretensions. He could have been a wealthy professional, but he chose another path. He was uninterested in the material things of this life. He pursued his political goals of independence, restoration of democracy and the ending of poverty with doggedness, determination, full concentration, and dedication. He loved people and used to say that he felt invigorated when he met people – workers, farmers, students, children, etc.

His honesty, which gave people of all ranks of society confidence in him, was apparent – one could see it shining from his features. He was a kindly man, believing in people, some said he trusted people too much, but that was part of his character. He saw what was good in people. He loved all of humanity. He was frugal. He could not stand waste and extravagance and carried this all through his political life. He was a family man and helped his brothers and sisters become educated. He was besides being an astute and wise politician, a scholar of note. He spent long hours studying – a part of him only recognized in recent years. He loved writing. He produced an enormous volume of books, articles, analyses and research material which are housed at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre. He was, above all, a humanitarian – genuinely devoted to the cause of liberating humanity from poverty and exploitation. Cde. Janet Jagan, in an article on the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of his death, wrote: *"he left behind a legacy that enriches our lives, that reminds us that on this earth there walked a man of unusual moral and intellectual status, who blended his ideas with vibrant activism not often seen in this special combination."*

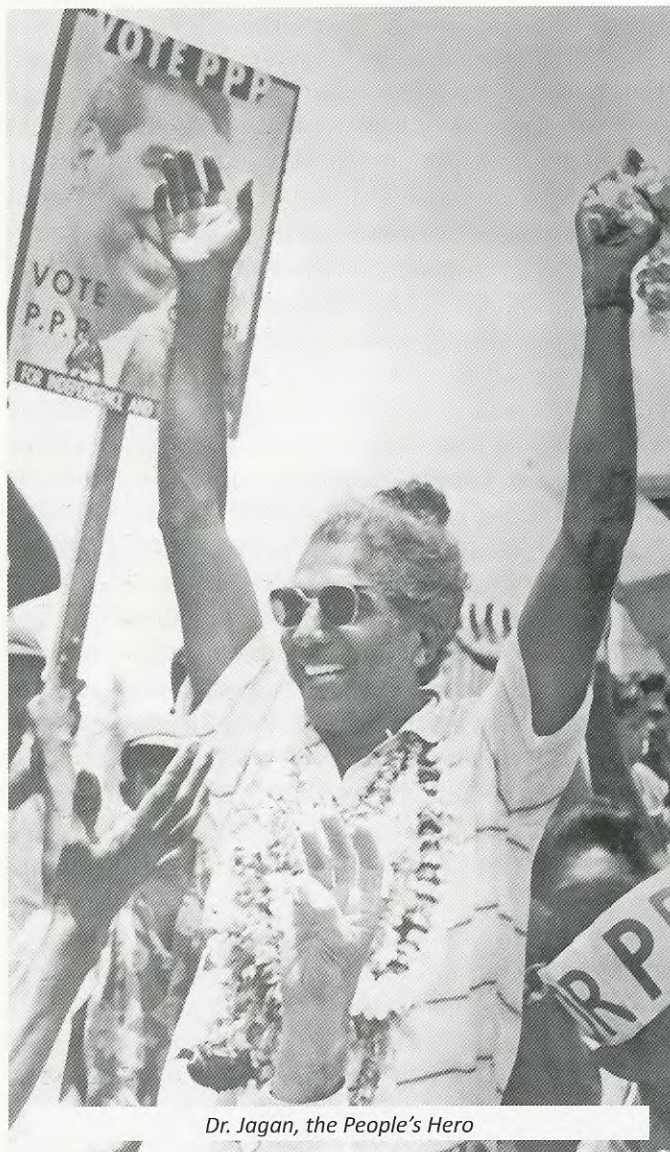
Dr. Jagan always warned of the dangers present in a situation where there are divisions, and where poverty is pervasive. He continued to remind us of these dangers because he wanted responsible leaders to seize the opportunity to find urgent answers to the outstanding problems facing Guyana and the world. Dr. Jagan is not with us today, but unfolding events are themselves reminding us that Dr. Jagan was right. When we turn on the television, we see the tragedy of continued war, ethnic violence, poverty and the suffering of women and children; then we know that there has to be an answer to all of this.



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# CHEDDI JAGAN

THE PEOPLE'S HERO, SET THE STAGE FOR A MODERN GUYANA  
ALMOST 60 YEARS AGO



*Dr. Jagan, the People's Hero*

It was 1961. CV Nunes, standing next to Cheddi at our home, asked me if there were something I would like to ask Cheddi. I was reading the book 1984. I asked Cheddi what would he like for our country by 1984. He was simple: "We all will be free Guyanese

citizens, and none of us will live in poverty. Children like you will be able to follow their dreams". There is no question that Cheddi is my hero.

As a child growing up on the Corentyne, I saw him many times as a visitor to our home. Two incidents are imprinted in my memory. The first was in 1961. During an election victory motorcade, he stopped in front of our home and asked for my bedridden grandpa. It was magical, as he took one of his garlands, full of coloured flowers to place it on my grandpa, but it ended up around my neck. The second was also in 1961, just before the election. Many of the PPP leaders were crisscrossing the Corentyne holding rallies. Cheddi was accompanied by leaders like CV Nunes, Fenton Ramsahoye, Ashton Chase, Brindley Benn, Jocelyn Hubbard, Victor Downer, and, of course, Janet. On one of the stops at our home, around lunch, he came by and helped me with my homework. He enjoyed chatting with young people. I remember that day as if it were yesterday. I remember him saying to my mom that "this boy is going to be a doctor".

But this simple man not only was a freedom fighter fighting for Guyana's independence, he was a visionary who had a modernization blueprint for our country. At the centre of his vision, Cheddi insisted that we have to build human capital through a strong educational infrastructure, providing a platform for Guyana's children to become professionals, entrepreneurs, agriculturists, builders etc. He saw this as critical if Guyana was going to transform our sovereignty into a viable nation. It is, therefore, no coincidence that, in 2013, some of our most important educational and training institutions, such as UG, the Guyana School of Agriculture and many of our high schools, celebrated their 50th anniversaries.

At the apex of the human capital development vision was the establishment of the University of Guyana. In October 2013, we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Guyana. In 1963, when the University of Guyana opened its doors, housed at Queens College, detractors like Forbes Burnham deemed UG "Jagan Night School". Today our doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, accountants, managers, pharmacists, medical technologists, nurses and other professionals are graduates of the University of Guyana. Many of these graduates are from families who would not have afforded to send their children to colleges.

The Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary also in 2013. On September 9<sup>th</sup> 1963, the Minister of Agriculture, Brindley Benn, signed the Order establishing the GSA. Graduates of the GSA have served with distinction in the agricultural sectors of Guyana and countries around the world. Indeed, many of the graduates of the GSA can be found working in international agencies and universities such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA), the University of Guyana, University of the West Indies (UWI), and McGill University in Canada. The school has trained young agriculturists from many Caribbean countries, following the footsteps of almost 200 students from various Caribbean and African countries who have graduated over the years from the GSA. Cheddi and the PPP at the time recognized the significance of agriculture in nurturing an economy with sustainable growth and a nation that was food and nutrition-secure. The GSA was established to ensure Guyana's agriculture sector was the pillar on which our economic fortunes were built.

But there was another significant plank in the plan for building human capital through education and training in Guyana. Cheddi realized that the country must offer its children secondary education. The quest for universal education for Guyanese children became a part of the plan, which began implementation around 1963. Public secondary schools in many regions of Guyana opened their doors around that time. It was the first time that the children of poor Guyanese families were able to gain access to secondary education. Before that, there were only a handful of secondary schools in Guyana, and most of these were private, fee-paying schools. From less than 10% of our children

accessing secondary schools in 1960, about 30% had access by 1964. After 1964, little progress in improving access to secondary schools was made. By 1990, secondary school education was only available to about 35% of Guyanese children who were eligible to attend high school. Cheddi resumed the task of ensuring universal access to secondary schooling when he became President in 1992. Today, because of the visionary leadership of Cheddi and the PPP, more than 95% of our children have access to secondary school education.

It was also around that time, in the early 1960s, that the teachers training college started as an in-service program, with teachers training being done at various places as evening classes around the country. At the time, most of Guyana's teachers were untrained. Less than 5% of our teachers then had any training. Today almost 80% of Guyana's teachers are trained teachers. It's a remarkable story of vision and leadership. In a parallel arrangement, Cheddi forced Bookers to convert its informal technician training into a school - the Technical Training Center at Port Mourant, which has produced mechanics and other technical staff for Guyanese industries, and many serve in countries around the world. That this center is slated for closure as part of SUGAR downsizing by APNU+AFC is a travesty.

The second pillar in the package of development initiatives resulting from the vision of Cheddi and the PPP was building an industrial base. Few realized that the industrialization of Guyana was started by the establishment at the time of the first ever industrial park in Guyana – the Ruimveldt Industrial Park. This is one of the earliest, if not the first, of the industrial parks in the Caribbean. Today, most of Guyana's giant industries are still operating from that site. Consider Banks DIH, Kissoon's Group of Companies, Continental, Beharry's Group of Companies etc. They all started out of the first industrial park. When Cheddi became President in 1992, almost three decades after he was overthrown in a conspiracy between the PNC, America and Great Britain, Ruimveldt was struggling as our only industrial park. Now there are several other industrial parks.

Interestingly, Cheddi, the socialist, is mainly responsible for giving an impetus to the development of a capitalist cadre in Guyana. It was Burnham and the PNC, seen by America as the capitalist

beacon, who destroyed entrepreneurship and the private sector. As part of his industrialization drive, he forced the then bauxite company (DEMBA) to build an aluminum plant, and this was the catalyst for constructing the Wismar Bridge across the Demerara River. Interestingly, it was under the PNC that the aluminum plant was abandoned.

Cheddi saw agriculture as the backbone of a thriving economy for an independent and food-secure Guyana. He started agricultural settlements such as Black Bush Polder, Canal Polder, Tapakuma and Mara, and established irrigation infrastructures such as Dawa, Mibikuri and Manarabisci Pump Stations and the Torani Canal that linked the Berbice and Canje Rivers. These today are critical elements in the growth of agriculture in Guyana, providing a sustainable base for the growth of the economy and creating jobs for our people. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when these critical agriculture infrastructures were put in place, rice production was less than 75,000 tons. Today, Guyana has the potential to produce 700,000 tons.

Cheddi realized that we would need a transport infrastructure. It was in that critical early 1960 period that Cheddi initiated an improvement of the transport sector by expanding the ferry services in Guyana through the construction of ferry boats locally. The Torani and other boats which still ply our rivers were constructed about fifty-five years ago. The feasibility study for the Linden Highway was completed at that time and the highway was later built under the PNC.

Cheddi Jagan and the PPP also recognized that a financial infrastructure must be established to support the creation of a nation and to support the country as it moves from being a low-developing country to a middle-income country. Guyana's Bank of Guyana started more than 50 years ago too. Cheddi was convinced that a tourism industry

was possible, but he recognized that every modern country had to have a hotel industry. The plans for Guyana's first international hotel – the Pegasus Hotel started to be arranged in the early 1960s, even though it was completed by 1968 after he demitted office. People questioned then, too, if we needed an international hotel.

Around fifty years ago, through vision and bold leadership, the beginning of modernization of a nation started. It is unfortunate that political machination in Guyana by the US and the UK with local politicians resulted in slowing down that first modernization thrust. Since 2001, another such period of rapid development has been taking place, initially led by Bharat Jagdeo. The building of the Berbice, Mahaicony and Mahaica River Bridges, the expansion of our highways and bridges, the construction of a ferry service to Nickerie, the construction of the University of Guyana campus, the construction of the Takutu Bridge, construction of a stadium, an aquatic centre, an athletic track, an improved airport, the upgrading of the Ogle Aerodrome, the Marriott and many others have poised Guyana to become a modern state.

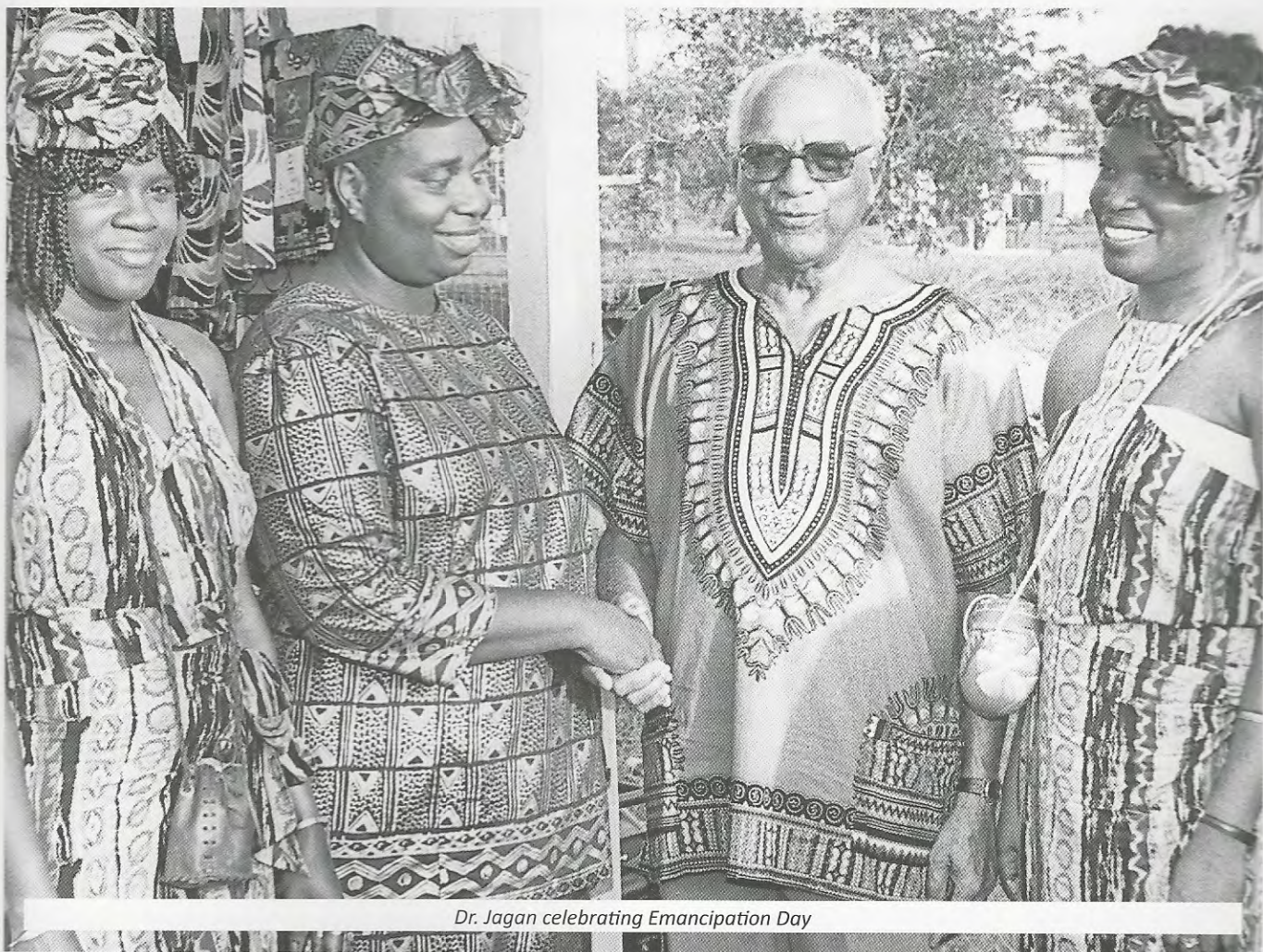
We must be bold and visionary just like Cheddi was when he started those initial transformative projects more than fifty years ago. Guyana's destiny as the Bread Basket of the Caribbean and our destiny to be a high-middle income country are at stake if we do not continue the work of modernization and transformation. With OIL on the horizon, Guyana must take a lesson from Cheddi - we need a vision and a plan. Where will we be in 2050?



*Dr. Leslie Ramsammy is a former Minister of Health and then Agriculture. He is the holder of a PhD in Microbiology and at one time was president of the World Health Assembly. He is a regular contributor to the Newspaper columns in particular the Mirror and the Guyana Times.*

# *Guyanese must reflect on* **Cheddi Jagan's Selfless Dedication**

*as we continue to celebrate 100 Years of his Life's Work*



*Dr. Jagan celebrating Emancipation Day*

Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the charismatic dentist-politician, walked with the Guyanese people on nearly every road in Guyana for nearly a century, sharing his message of Peace, Progress, and Prosperity.

It was in June 1948 at the graveside of the Enmore Martyrs that he quietly pledged to dedicate his life to further the cause of ordinary people like the sugar workers. He had already witnessed oppression firsthand at Port Mourant as the child of sugar workers, and later in the United States, where he studied. There he had lived among poor Americans,

white and black. Those early experiences made him take a stronger stand on the side of the poor and marginalized.

On his return to Guyana as a dentist in 1943, he distanced himself from both the League of Coloured Peoples and the British Guiana East Indian Association - organizations that did not fully advocate on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised. Since 1947, Jagan championed the cause of the sugar workers because they were the most oppressed - without a union, without a party and without an

identifiable leader. He built his political base among the working people in the sugar estates. It was the sugar workers' heroism, their determination to fight oppression, and loyalty to Jagan that made him such a great leader. The sugar workers energized him and gave him the courage to carry on.

In return, he gave lifelong service and dedicated leadership. He pinned his life down for them. Sugar workers and their families will never forget 'Doc.' They will always remember the long, tedious journey he walked with them, and how he never sold them out to the sugar barons. They will always remember how he improved their living conditions, moving them from 'logie' to 'High House' in the housing schemes. They will remember him for providing them with electricity and running water. They will never forget the schools, the University of Guyana (referred to derogatorily by some as 'Jagan night school'), the roads and the health centres he built. He was their Master Builder.

Jagan helped send their children abroad to become doctors, economists, and engineers. He helped by his example to transform ordinary Guyanese workers into accomplished and astute politicians. The sugar workers will remember him as their great teacher, who taught them about their rights, using the simple cup as a symbol so that those who could neither read nor write would be able to vote.

In those days, Dr. Jagan helped to politicize the masses through the print media 'The Mirror' and 'The Thunder.' Many became politically conscious by his regular column 'Straight Talk.' Each household on the sugar estate bought a copy of The Mirror and The Thunder, which demonstrated total loyalty to the People's Progressive Party.

The sugar workers taught their children to garland, Dr. Jagan. The 'mala' has become a political symbol of endearment and affection to this day. Many sugar

workers fell at Cheddi's feet Indian-style, but the humble Jagan stopped them from doing this. To the sugar workers and his supporters at large, Cheddi Jagan was Gandhi, Mandela and Martin Luther King combined, but Cheddi never saw himself as a demigod.

The workers' composed songs and poetry about him:

"Doctor Jagan, Cheddi Jagan

The one and only

God save Jagan."

Streets, children and an airport are named after him. Some upper class and Anglicized Guyanese despised his ideology. But for over fifty years, he never abandoned the sugar workers. He lived by his convictions and waited his turn patiently to become president in October 1992.

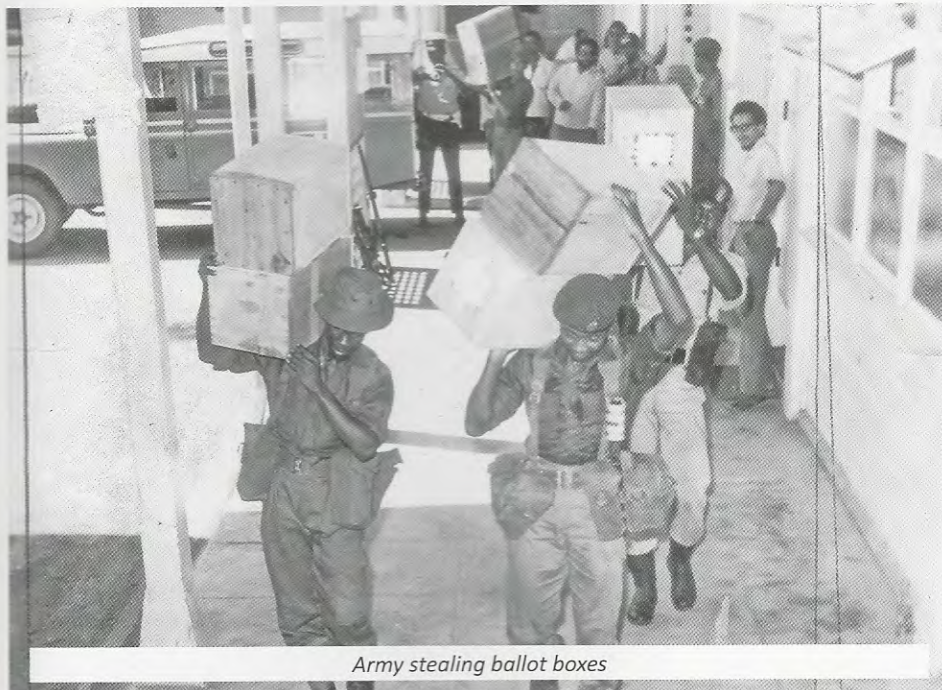
The people at Enmore still remember the pledge Cheddi Jagan made at the graveside of the Enmore Martyrs. They remember the grand political meetings at Mongoose Square. They remember the old Matya where the strikers were fed. They remember the 'dacta' with the strings of colourful malas around his neck. They remember the man who looked after their business in Georgetown, his simplicity, and infectious smile.

This year, as we participate in the centenary celebration of Cheddi Jagan's life, the selfless dedication, honesty, inspiration and teachings that exemplified the life of this Guyanese political patriot ought to be emulated by politicians and citizens alike, as we strive to bring about meaningful change, lasting peace, progress and prosperity for all Guyanese.



*Peter Jailall is a teacher, poet and storyteller. A graduate of the University of Toronto (B.Ed., M.A.), Peter is an avid supporter of human rights and social values as well as an advocate of environmental protection. Peter has published several books, This Healing Place, Yet Another Home, When September Comes, Mother Earth: poems for her children. He was the recipient for a Mississauga Arts Award in the category of Established Literary Artist. Peter is one of the founding members of the Association of Concerned Guyanese in Toronto.*

# THE FIGHT FOR FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS IN GUYANA



*Army stealing ballot boxes*

Dr. Cheddi Jagan contested the 1947 General Elections as an Independent Candidate for the Central Georgetown Constituency. Dr. Jagan was one of the three (3) persons from the Political Affairs Committee(PAC) who contested among the group of 31 Independent Candidates. The Elections were held on November 24, 1947, under a system of First Past the Post and Dr. Jagan became one of the eight (8) Independent Candidates who was elected to the twenty-five (25) member Legislative Council.

The voters' roll was greater than that of 1935, moving from 9,514 to 59,193 mainly due to constitutional changes made in 1943, which saw the right to vote extended to people earning at least \$10 a month, although candidates were required to have a monthly income of at least \$100. None-the-less, hundreds of thousands of Guyanese were denied their democratic right to be registered as voters, and so they were excluded from the elections of 1947. Although winning the Constituency of Central Georgetown, Dr. Jagan was extremely dissatisfied

with this, and championed the cause of adult Guyanese to be allowed their democratic right to vote in general elections, irrespective of their salaries and possessions; hence he embraced the concept of Universal Adult Suffrage.

The People's Progressive Party (PPP) was formed on January 1, 1950, and its first Congress was held on March 31 and April 1, 1951. The Office Bearers elected at that Congress were Leader - Cheddi Jagan, Chairman - Forbes Burnham, First Vice-Chairman - H. Aubrey Fraser, Second Vice-Chairman - Clinton Wong, General Secretary -

Janet Jagan, Assistant General Secretary - Sydney King, Treasurer - Ramkarran; and General Council Members - Ashton Chase, Rudy Luck, Frank O. Van Sertima, Ivan Cendrecourt, May Thompson, Hubert Critchlow, E. Kennard, Theo Lee, Ulric Fingall, Jainarine Singh, Sheila La Taste, Joseph P. Lachmansingh, Cecil Cambridge, Fred Bowman and Pandit S. Misir.

Dr. Jagan kept the issue of Universal Adult Suffrage alive, and the PPP's continued agitation won its first victory when the Waddington Commission report, which to the British Labour Government on June 29, 1951, supported Universal Adult Suffrage in British Guiana.

The Waddington Commission's, further constitutional reforms led to the creation of the House of Assembly to replace the Legislative Council. The new House had twenty-eight (28) members; twenty-four (24) members elected in

single-member constituencies, a speaker appointed by the Governor and three ex officio members. Elections were held under the new system on April 27, 1953, and were convincingly won by the People's Progressive Party, which took eighteen (18) of the twenty-four (24) seats. The Voters' Roll was 208,939. This massive increase in the voters' roll was as a result of the newly won Universal Adult Suffrage. The PPP won 77, 695 or 51.04 percent of the valid votes. However, after assuming power, PPP leader Cheddi Jagan embarked on a series of policies that involved radical social reform, mainly directed at the colonial oligarchy. The British colonial authorities sent in troops in response to the alleged threat of a Marxist revolution, and Governor Alfred Savage suspended the Constitution in October (only 133 days after it had come into force) and set up a transitional government of conservative politicians, businessmen, and civil servants.

The Transitional government continued to occupy the seat of government until General Elections were held on August 12, 1957. The voters' roll was 212, 518. With the Split in the PPP leading up to the Elections, the PPP Jagan won nine (9) out of the fourteen (14) seats; PPP Burnham got three seats NLP and UDP secured one seat each. Dr. Jagan continued to lead his Party on the path to national unity, as well as growth and development for all. Great emphasis was placed on providing vital social services, such as health and education and providing key and critical support to all aspects of agriculture. Burnham and his supporters continued to forge unpatriotic and disruptive alliances with the colonial masters and other external forces as they fought to undermine the democratic will of the Guyanese people.

Another round of constitutional reform in 1961 led to the creation of the Legislature, consisting of an elected 36-member Legislative Assembly (35 members elected in single-member constituencies, who in turn elected a Speaker) and an appointed 13-member Senate.

These elections were held on August 21, 1961, and the voters' roll was 246, 120. These Elections were again won by the PPP, who took 20 of the 35 directly-elected seats. This resulted in mass demonstrations led by the PNC, a general strike, and severe inter-racial violence. After a few weeks, the British authorities intervened by sending in troops, and the

Governor declared a state of emergency.

Following these events, the search for an electoral system which can remove the PPP from power continued, and so further constitutional reforms were enacted to create a unicameral 54-member House of Assembly elected by proportional representation (53 members elected in a single nationwide constituency, and a Speaker elected by MPs).

The first elections held under the new system took place on December 7, 1964, and although the PPP again emerged as the largest party, the PNC was able to form a coalition government with the United Force, which together held 29 seats. The PPP secured the most votes, 24 seats and it was the only Party that increased its percentage share of the votes over the 1961 election. However, via talks with other leaders, the Governor violated British conventions that would allow Dr. Cheddi Jagan to form the government as the leader of the Party with the majority of votes. Instead, the Governor, through a constitutional amendment, called on Mr. Burnham of the People's National Congress (PNC) with 22 seats to establish a government with the assistance of the UF (United Force) 7 seats, creating the short-lived PNC-UF Coalition. Notwithstanding some differences between the two situations, the principles of bringing some resolution today to these inconclusive election results remain the same as they were in 1964. Despite this manipulation, and propaganda stating that the PPP lost the elections, Jagan refused to resign as Prime Minister and had to be removed by Governor Richard Luyt, with Burnham replacing him.

Looking back at the recent British election results poignantly makes the point that with a hung Parliament, the Prime Minister remains as Prime Minister until there is a resolution to the inconclusiveness. In Britain, with this hung Parliament, Prime Minister Gordon Brown would remain in office until he submitted his resignation; and don't forget that Gordon Brown also is a contender for power. I should add that Britain had its first hung Parliament in 1974.

Can you imagine what would have happened if the Queen or some Monarchical delegate were to pressure Prime Minister Gordon Brown to resign, or fabricate some legal rule to make

Gordon Brown irrelevant, and thereby enable Clegg and Cameron, leader of the Conservative Party, to form a coalition government? Picture the British outrage and British uproar that would ensue. Nonetheless, the 1964 British Guiana (now Guyana) Election results also were inconclusive, and given that British Guiana was a British Colony then, the British Constitution was mainly the overarching framework guiding and interpreting electoral rules in the Colonies and on the Mainland. But the British colonial authorities behaved quite differently then, in comparison with what is currently ensuing in Britain. The constitutional rules on the status of the Prime Minister in this current state of flux were pretty much the same then as they are now. Prime Minister Gordon Brown remains as Prime Minister until there is some resolution to this inconclusiveness. To date, December 7, 1964, marked 53 years since the infamous 1964 Election Day in British Guiana. The U.S. and British Governments imposed this election upon the people in a bid to remove the PPP from office through a new electoral arrangement, Proportional Representation (PR).

After independence in 1966, the House of Assembly was renamed the National Assembly. The electoral system remained unchanged, but the elections were rigged by the PNC, which had transferred responsibility for holding elections from the Electoral Commission to a government department. As was predicted, by 1968 the PNC/TUF Coalition was experiencing numerous difficulties, which ultimately led to the end of the coalition and both parties acting independently of each other. Dr. Jagan had warned of this catastrophe, but his warnings were ignored. He furthered hinted at the emergence of an authoritarian state. Unfair elections were held in 1968 and 1973. A new constitution, promulgated in 1980, led to the creation of an executive president; the leader of the party that received the most votes in an election would automatically assume that

post. Two further fraudulent elections were held in 1980 and 1985, with the PNC winning an increasing number of seats on each occasion.

Dr. Jagan's grit and determination motivated his supporters over the period of these rigged elections. He made adequate use of every opportunity to lobby for free and fair elections. He never gave up on his principles and his belief system. He expended enormous energy, time and resources in building the PPP, in keeping the membership informed and were very confident that the PPP would return to the seat of Government. He took the fight to the corrupt, dictatorial and bankrupt government at every stage. The National Assembly, the Regions, the Communities, Neighbourhoods, and villages were frequented and the wrongdoings of the illegal government were exposed.

Due to demands from Western countries and international organisations, democratic reforms were introduced in the late 1990s, and after several postponements, free and fair elections were held on October 5, 1992. The result was a victory for the PPP, with Jagan returning to power after a 28-year hiatus. The PPP went on to win the next elections in 1997. It was so unfortunate that the late great, Father of this Nation, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, was called away by the Creator before the 1997 Elections. All Guyanese were so motivated and upbeat with the prospect of a "new" and successful life under the leadership of Dr. Jagan, but the Creator knows best.

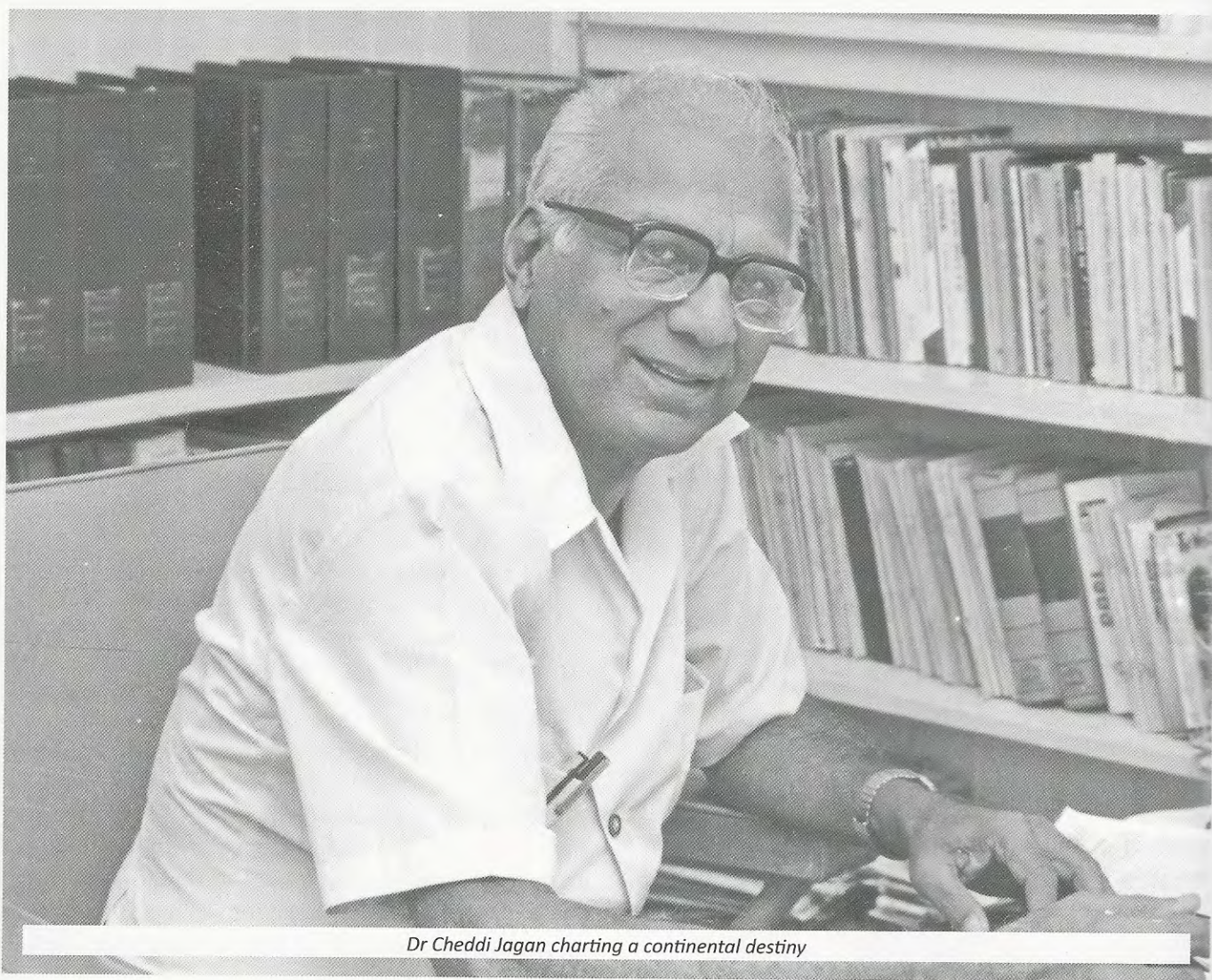
Dr. Jagan's struggles, determination, and strategies are well documented, and many thanks must be expressed to the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre's Management and staff for ensuring that these documents are readily made available for all who are interested in doing research or are just curious about the work and life of the late comrade Cheddi.



*Ganga Persaud is a former Minister of Local Government and a Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive Party. He was also Chairman of the Public / Police Service Commissions. He is a Member of Parliament and Principal of the Guyana Learning Institute and former Lecturer at the University of Guyana. He is the holder of a Master's Degree in Management and Supervision, a Bachelor's Degree in Public Management and another in Education.*

# CHEDDI JAGAN'S VISION

## *for Hemispheric Integration*



People of all walks of life in many parts of the world regard Dr. Cheddi Jagan as the leader who inspired the anti-colonial and pro-democratic struggle in the Caribbean region, and who worked to build solidarity between the Caribbean Community (Caricom) and the Latin American countries. On this birth centenary of the legendary Guyanese leader, there is a reflection on his achievements, the challenges, and setbacks he faced, his ideas and

his visionary thinking. His ideas span a gamut of issues, but he purposely promoted his vision for the Caribbean and hemispheric integration.

### **The federation issue**

It was natural for Cheddi Jagan to look beyond Guyana in the shaping of his political and economic views. From the time he entered the political arena in the early 1940s, his socialist-oriented outlook

made him a natural internationalist. In analysing the political and economic conditions in Guyana, he saw a clear linkage with developing situations in the Caribbean, the Americas and the world at large. He became a vocal supporter for West Indian unity and backed the decisions of the 1943 Montego Bay conference that determined how the proposed West Indian federation should be shaped and developed. The conference, which involved West Indian leaders and representatives of the British Government, agreed that each unit territory would be granted self-government status, and the new federation would be given dominion status as was enjoyed by Canada and Australia.

But the Montego Bay agreement was discarded when the federation was eventually established in 1958, without the participation of Guyana, Belize and the Bahamas. The governing PPP had decided that entry into the federation would be based on the decision of a referendum, and Dr. Jagan consistently demanded that only if the unit territories were self-governing would the federation be able to survive. The federation, as expected, broke up within four years when disagreements erupted among the federal leaders themselves. Two of them, Eric Williams and Grantley Adams, belatedly admitted that Dr. Jagan's position on the constitutional framework of the federation was correct.

### The independence struggle

Cheddi Jagan relied heavily on support from the hemisphere during his epic struggle for Guyana's independence. On December 30, 1959, he wrote to leaders of political parties, trade unions and various organisations all over the world soliciting support for, and solidarity with, Guyana's fight for independence. Latin America was specially targeted, and responses of support for the Guyanese struggle quickly came from political and trade union leaders from this region. Some Latin American governments later spoke up in support for Guyana's independence when the UN Committee on Decolonisation debated a resolution after Dr. Jagan addressed that body in December 1961.

All of these actions were as a result of Cheddi Jagan's political activism in the Latin American arena. He was also a vocal participant in the Inter-American Conferences, the second of which in Caracas in May 1960, passed a resolution supporting independence for Guyana.

### Economic and social problems affecting integration

As a first step in promoting regional integration, a political leader must express understanding and show solid forms of solidarity with the people and states that belong to that particular region. Cheddi Jagan excelled in this, and his activism for Latin America placed him in the vanguard of the movement for political or economic integration in the American hemisphere.

As the decade of the 1960s progressed, the Guyanese leader, in profound analyses, showed that the much publicised Alliance for Progress introduced by President Kennedy, who implored governments to address the basic needs of their citizens—"homes, work, and land, health, and schools"—was proving to be a failure. He explained that those reforms were not carried out by the Latin American oligarchy—who included the military, the upper-clergy and the *latifundistas* [the large landowners]—and this resulted in tragic consequences for the people.

Today, nearly six decades later, the governments in the Americas continue to face these same challenges set out by Kennedy. But there are now new challenges and problems brought about by the struggle to improve democracy, human rights, trade, health, education and security, and the ongoing fight against crime, drugs, corruption and growing poverty.

### Caribbean opposition

The period of the early 1960s was particularly difficult for the first PPP government, and the Cold War hysteria of those days prevented close political working relations between Dr. Jagan and his counterparts in the English-speaking Caribbean. Those pro-colonialist leaders had earlier ganged up against the PPP in the pre- and post-1953 period, and Dr. Jagan and some leaders of the party were not allowed to enter those islands for fear that they would infest them with "heretic" ideas for political and economic change. Clearly, the Caribbean leaders in those days preferred to promote and defend colonialism than to encourage integration.

Nevertheless, contacts with the rest of the Caribbean did show some improvements on the economic side, with Guyana showing gains in trade, especially with rice and other agricultural products. There were also annual meetings of Caribbean leaders, during which Dr. Jagan made successful efforts to garner



*Daniel Ortega, Morris Bishop and Fidel Castro*

our regional integration movement for overall planning and territorial specialization and evolve a basic needs strategy. Our primary aim must be the eradication of poverty. We must set our face sternly against corruption and extravagance . . . We must actively deepen and widen our integration movement. We have to properly situate ourselves in the wider world and [with] our immediate neighbours. Towards this end, Guyana can be the instrument of closer ties with the countries of

more markets for Guyana's agricultural products.

During 1964-1992, when Cheddi Jagan languished in the opposition, the English-speaking Caribbean governments turned their backs on democracy and, without any shame whatsoever, cuddled up to those who saw no use for free and fair elections. Cheddi Jagan's voice was a lonely one crying out in the Caribbean wilderness, but ideology and power bloc politics blocked the ears of the regional leadership. But that voice was heard by the Caribbean masses, who offered their solidarity to the Guyanese democrats and gave them the courage to continue the struggle for free and fair elections and the restoration of democracy.

### **Expanding Caribbean integration**

Despite being shunned by Caricom leaders before October 1992, Dr. Jagan expressed no feeling of bitterness towards them. In his writings and political speeches, he was ever so much critical of Caribbean leaders for what he said was their blatant hypocrisy, but he reasoned that they were toeing an ideological line and could not afford to divert from it for fear that they would come under imperialist pressure. He did not waste his time to admonish them when he won the presidency in October 1992, but later that month, at the Caricom summit in Trinidad, he lectured them into the necessity of expanding the integration movement in the region.

He stated: "We need quickly to deepen and widen

South America."

### **Expanding integration with Latin America**

A few months after the 1992 Trinidad summit, he stressed the idea of promoting Guyana as a bridge for an economic linkage between Caricom and South America. He felt that infrastructural links like the Guyana-Brazil road and the Guyana-Suriname ferry could well build that economic bridge, and he promoted this idea very forcefully within Caricom, during meetings with South American leaders, and in discussion with the international financial institutions.

As a profound thinker, Dr. Jagan's mind was working over-time. At the first Summit of the Americas in Miami in December 1994, he was one of few leaders who made concrete proposals for hemispheric integration. It was here that he first presented his visionary proposal for the Regional Development Fund. He also suggested the establishment of an American Volunteer Development Corps aimed at combating the brain drain and the shortage of skills, administrative incapacity, and the high costs of advisers and consultants. In 1996, he again highlighted these proposals at the Summit on Sustainable Development in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

He was also particularly interested in integrating Guyana with the rest of South America. He proposed that a practical way to begin this process

was through education. By getting young children to learn Spanish as a second language. Knowing to communicate in Spanish and also Portuguese, since Guyana has increasingly close relations with Brazil—would be an important asset, he reasoned.

Dr. Jagan was also a strong believer in the unity of the smaller economies in Latin America and the Caribbean in the struggle for free and fair trade. In his final public address on February 13, 1997, he summed up his view on this matter when he declared open the sixth meeting of the Americas' Working Group on Smaller Economies held in Georgetown. He stated: "... Given existing social and economic realities in our hemisphere, as manifested in the wide disparities between and among us, it is only logical that there should be special and preferential treatment for the less fortunate, in order to facilitate their active and productive participation in the integration process and to increase their levels of development. Free and fair trade is a basic prerequisite for any successful integration of the Americas."

### Promoting democracy

The overriding theme of Dr. Jagan's views on integration within the hemisphere was that of expanding democracy. In September 1993, when he addressed the OAS, he stated that all states must ensure that their people enjoy not only civil and political rights but also economic, social and cultural rights. He reasoned that if these did not go together, then there would be no human advancement, and this could sometimes cause democratic institutions to be subverted, which could lead to "a reversion to totalitarian rule."

He was adamant that democracy could not be sustained if the problem of poverty was not tackled. He posited that when people have a perception that development is too slow, they would want

to carry out their own actions, which can lead to destabilisation and changes in the pattern of democratic development.

He was concerned over what he viewed as a growing apathy with the electoral process in many Latin American countries. A sizeable proportion of the people did not bother to vote, and there were already signs of social and political upheavals in some countries. He wondered if some leaders were distancing themselves from their people, and if that was the situation, it could lead to dangerous times.

In September 2001, the governments of thirty-four countries in the hemisphere established their common definition of democracy in the Inter American Democratic Charter. Since then, there have been convulsions and some reversals in the democratic process in a few countries, but relatively little has been done collectively by regional organizations to openly and sharply condemn such reversals practised or encouraged by political groups attempting to use non-constitutional means to gain power.

As Dr. Jagan always emphasized, countries in this hemisphere must also implement policies and programmes to develop a *culture of democracy*, which would inspire a determination in citizens to respect and defend democracy and its institutions.

Cheddi Jagan has left our governments and the people of the Caribbean and the American hemisphere with a number of useful ideas, and with challenges to work for meaningful integration—economic or political, or both. It definitely will not be an easy task, but the vision of an integrated Caribbean with strong political, economic and trade links to South, Central, and North America is a challenge the governments and citizens of the entire hemisphere will have to face.



*Dr. Odeen Ishmael, Ambassador Emeritus (retired), historian and author, served as Guyana's ambassador in the USA, Venezuela, Kuwait and Qatar. His political career included being a member of the Executive Committee of the Progressive Youth Organisation and also of the Central Committee of the PPP. Among his books are The Guyana Story, Guyana Legends, The Democracy Perspective in the Americas, and the trilogy, The Trail of Diplomacy—The Guyana-Venezuela Border Issue. He is currently a Senior Research Fellow of the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs.*

# CHEDDI JAGAN:

## The Intellectual

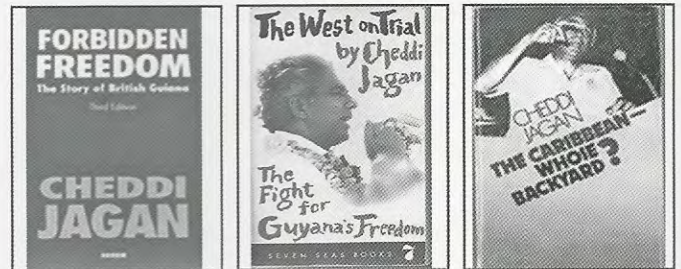
"Of great importance. Not only interesting but valuable. That was how the 'Time Literary Supplement, London' described Dr. Jagan's 'The West on Trial' first published in 1966. And, in no less flattering language, the People's World, San Francisco, described the book as 'a first-hand, eyewitness account of imperialism in action. He writes with illumination and with an enviable command of facts and figures.'"

The above are but a few of the testimonials regarding Dr. Jagan's writing ability which is often eclipsed by his towering political personality. It is no exaggeration, however, to say that Dr. Jagan stands out as one of the most prolific, if not the most prolific writer in Guyana and the wider Caribbean. His writings are so factually rich and researched that it is not unusual for readers to experience some amount of indigestion when perusing his voluminous writings.

Among his numerous works are the now celebrated 'The West on Trial' which is an autobiographical piece highlighting his struggle against the intrigues and machinations of imperialism, and following independence, against PNC dictatorial rule. It was a monumental study of the socio-economic and political history of Guyana from the time of European colonization until independence from Britain in May 1966. There is also an epilogue in the latest issue of the book in 1997. By then, Dr. Jagan was in a position to pronounce in definitive language that the 'West was no longer on Trial. It was found guilty.'

Despite his voluminous writings "The West on Trial" remains his most enduring work and to a large extent a major testimony to his life and struggle. It is a story of a man's struggle for Guyana's self-determination and independence against overwhelming odds.

The book captures the mood and atmosphere of the pre and post-colonial Guyana and the excitement of



the masses in anticipation of a new day. Dr. Jagan fairly accurately defined the local and international situation and situated the problem of the country's underdevelopment where it rightly belonged, at the doorsteps of Anglo-American imperialism.

A substantial section of the book is about the several attempts by the British and the American governments to destabilize and remove the PPP government. Among these were the suspension of the British Guiana Constitution of 1953, the machinations against the PPP governments of 1961 and 1964, the riots of February 1962; the refusal of British forces to aid the civil power; opposition-inspired strikes of 1963 and CIA support for them; the orchestrated violence and the imposition of proportional representation to oust the PPP from office in 1964 among others.

### **Forbidden Freedom- the Story of British Guiana."**

Earlier, in his formative political years in the early 1950s Dr. Jagan wrote 'Forbidden Freedom- the Story of British Guiana. This book was written in 1954 while still in prison in the aftermath of the suspension of the British Guiana Constitution. Dr. Jagan demonstrated how the overthrow of the democratically elected PPP fitted snugly with a game plan concocted by the United States to punish governments that are not subservient to the dictates of imperialism.

### **The USA in South America**

In his work "The USA in South America" Dr. Jagan took a broader and more comprehensive swipe at

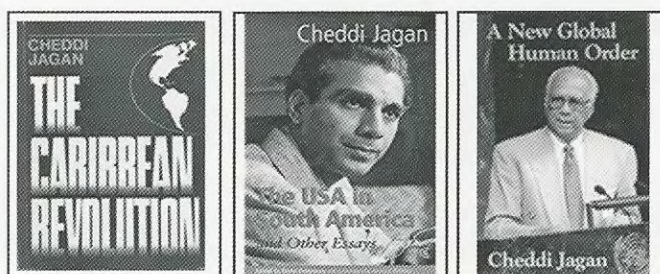
US imperialism in Latin and Central America. This captivating and well-researched work consisted of a number of papers in the form of chapters as well as a letter to President Kennedy written by him in his capacity as Premier in 1963. The first and fifth papers are based on Guyana, the second on the Non-aligned Movement, the third on the Caribbean and Central America and the fourth on aspects of regional and hemispheric security. The presentations provided a critical and analytical perspective on the politics of hegemony viewed through a Marxist/Leninist prism.

The book was written between 1968 and 1986 at a time when the Cold War was raging with great intensity which saw among its several casualties the imposition of the Burnham dictatorship on the backs of the Guyanese people through electoral fraud and concomitant high levels of economic mismanagement and social decline. The essays were situated within the context of United States hegemony in the region and Burnham's opportunism in playing one superpower against the other. The policy prescriptions of US in relation to its dealings with hemispheric governments were analysed both from a political and geo-strategic angle.

The period encompassed in the publication were highly significant and coincided with great turbulence in the region. Dr. Jagan's grasp on the issues and the intellectual depth and power of reasoned and persuasive commentary spoke to his writing and communicative genius.

### Selective Speeches

In his selective speeches delivered at several fora between 1992 and 1994, Dr. Jagan's visionary qualities became much more manifest and crystallized. The crippling burden of foreign debt and its debilitating impact on human development, the catastrophic consequences of twenty-eight years of undemocratic rule, the failure to implement pro-people programmes and policies by the previous government all conspired to impoverish the masses



and deny them a dignified and secure living.

### A New Global Human Order

This publication speaks to a more matured and statesmanlike Dr. Jagan whose passion for the poor and the oppressed transcended national boundaries. In a real sense, his call for a New Global Human Order could be seen as a culmination of long but glorious search to find a solution to bridge the gap between the developed North and the impoverished South.

With characteristic clarity of mind and purpose, Dr. Jagan showed how it is possible to end hunger and poverty to the mutual benefit of both the North and the South. The end of the Cold War, he posited, had created new opportunities for mankind as a whole to reap what he described as the 'peace dividend.' This, along with other financial innovations such as a global pollution tax, currency speculation tax, and reduced working hours would allow for lower levels of unemployment while at the same time allowing for more financial aid to the South in the form of debt cancellation and long-term rescheduling, soft loans, and grants all of which could help to promote human development.

In essence, the entire corpus of Dr. Jagan's writings centered around the idea of a more equitable and just society, where man to man are not like wolves trying to devour at the expense of each other but as brothers and friends, where the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' becomes the *raison d'être* of human existence.



*Hydar Ally is a Writer and Columnist for the Mirror Newspaper and a Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive Party. He is the author of two publications: "Pragmatism or Opportunism? Guyana's Foreign Policy Behaviour 1966-1985" and "Insightful Views on Guyana". Mr. Ally is currently Chairman of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre. He is the holder of a Master's Degree in Political Science and also the Graduate Diploma in Developing Studies.*

# CHEDDI JAGAN'S GROWTH AND POVERTY REDUCTION POLICIES



*Children of the Hinterland have a better future because of Dr. Jagan's policies*

The appalling state of poverty in Guyana threatens the stability and future of the economy. In 2017, an estimated 4 in 10 adults and 1 in 2 children lived in poverty, i.e., surviving on an income of U\$1.75 per day or G\$10,494 per month. Poverty among families, mostly Amerindians living in rural and interior communities is higher. Worse yet, the level of poverty is likely to get worse, given the increasing joblessness and lack of priority in poverty reduction policies and programs by the Granger Administration over the last three years. In fact, the current administration's budget and tax policies are increasing the financial and economic hardships of families, pushing additional families into poverty, and families currently in poverty into deeper

poverty and threatening decades of progress in poverty alleviation and reduction.

Ending poverty is difficult, but certainly not impossible. It is difficult because poverty is linked to multiple causes, including poor nutrition and health, underdeveloped academic and workforce skills, insufficient jobs that pay at least a sustainability-living wage, no access to affordable housing, poor parental education, and the lack of access to critical social services. Poverty is also inter-generational, in that inequities, lack and misfortunes are passed on from one generation to the next. Thus, an appropriate policy response includes a combination of policies that address the multiple causes of poverty. It is not impossible because, fortunately,

Guyana's economic history provides one of the most successful case studies of successful poverty reduction, high and sustained growth, and widespread social and economic development through effective and strategic policy intervention. This paper synthesizes "what works" when it comes to economic policy, poverty reduction strategy, and anti-poverty reduction programs under the Jagan's administration, which had successfully reduced poverty and achieved high economic growth. This effort is designed to inform policymakers and discussions about new investments and anti-poverty programs, as well as identify reforms necessary to fight poverty successfully.

### Growth and Poverty Reduction Policies That Work

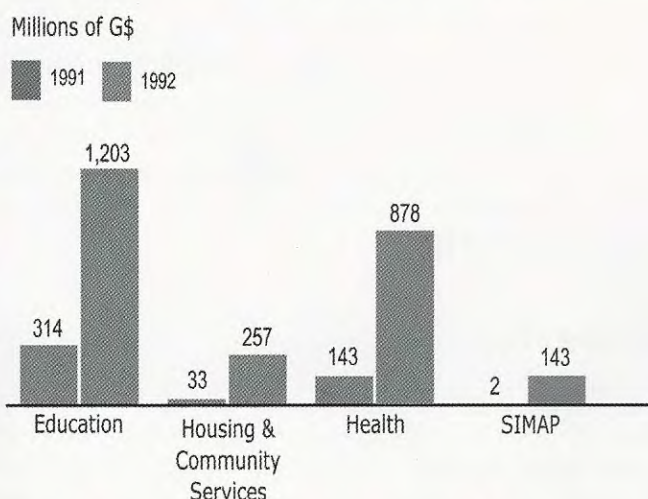
The superior economic growth under Jagan's administration (discussed later in the paper) was primarily the result of sound macroeconomic policy and management, transformative political leadership, and good governance. Likewise, the unprecedented decline in poverty was due to effective budget, taxation and social policies, and a commitment to ending poverty and improving the quality of life of citizens. Of note, Jagan's administration:

**Strengthened democratic institutions.** From 1992 – 1997, there were steady improvements in individual and collective political rights, civil liberties and freedoms, according to data by the Freedom House – an internationally-recognized thinktank. Poverty, for Dr. Jagan, was not just a lack of sufficient income to meet one's needs, but the inability to realize one's full potential as a human being. Thus, the improvement in democratic institutions governing people was necessary to empower them to make better decisions and pursue their prosperity.

- **Reoriented the national budget to prioritize critical social services.** In 1991, public spending on core social services had reached a historic low of 4.4% of GDP from about 13% in 1984. However, beginning in 1993, the national budget underwent a series of realignments to prioritize investments in core social services (public education, affordable housing, and healthcare) and away from an oversized, unproductive and corrupt public sector. By the end of 1997,

total public spending on social services as a percentage of GDP, including social safety nets, more than doubled to 10.1%. Jagan's administration prioritized access to quality public education, healthcare services, and affordable housing as the principal means of creating opportunities for families to acquire skills, find meaningful work, climb out of poverty and move up the economic ladder.

### Realignment of The National Budget to Prioritize Investment in Critical Social Services Lifted Thousands Out of Poverty



Data Source: World Bank. Guyana: From Recovery to Sustained Growth. Pg. 124.

GUYANA BUDGET & POLICY INSTITUTE

- **Significantly increased public investment in vital public infrastructure.** Having a modern network of roads, bridges, waterways, and good communication and energy infrastructures are vital for creating local markets, encouraging economic activities, promoting private investment, and creating better jobs. This infrastructure, however, was broken and dysfunctional from more than a decade of neglect. However, in 1992, public investment in the infrastructure sector increased by more than 540% to \$4.7 billion from \$730 million in 1991. These investments helped rebuild foundational infrastructure - creating new local markets, stimulating local economic activity, and creating thousands of private-sector jobs in

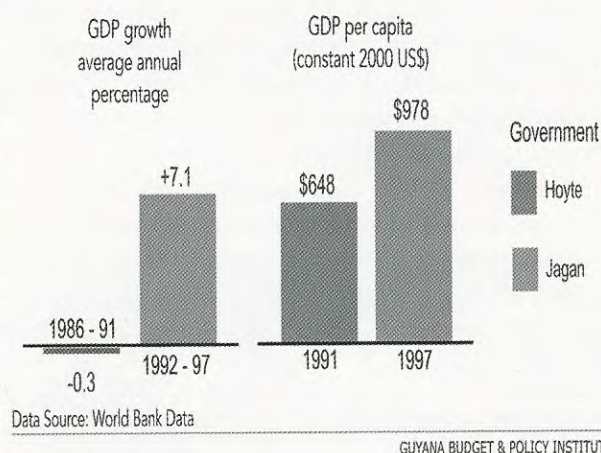
the agriculture and commercial sectors.

- Strengthened poverty reduction programs targeting the most vulnerable.** In addition to education and health services programs, the government also invested heavily in direct poverty reduction programs, to protect the most vulnerable and needy households. In 1992, total public investment in social security, poverty alleviation, water, and housing increased to 3.3% of GDP from 0.5 % in 1991. For the Social Impact Amelioration Program, which provided direct food subsidy to poor families, total public investment increased by more than 7,000% to \$143 million in 1992 from \$2 million in 1991. Likewise, payments of pension benefits under the National Insurance Scheme were increased to benefit more poor families. These programs provided a critical pathway to self-sufficiency and long-term economic prosperity for families that had been living in poverty.

### Guyana's Economic Turnaround

Dr. Cheddi Jagan of the People's Progressive Party (PPP/C) was the Executive President of Guyana from 1992 – 1997. During this period, Guyana's economy grew at an average of more than 7% a year, i.e., a rate that was more than twice the average growth rate of the Caribbean during the same period and the highest level of sustained growth in the country's recorded history, (see graph below). Per capita GDP increased by more than 51% to \$978 in 1997 from \$648 in 1991. Inflation was reduced from 128% in 1991 to under 2% in 1997 and private investment increased by 266% over the same period. What makes this economic turnaround even more impressive is that, for much of this period, the government spent more than 90 cents of every \$1 of tax revenues to repay and service public debts that were accumulated under the previous administration. In 1991, public debt was almost 600% of GDP. Moreover, from 1986 – 1991, the economy contracted on average by less than a percent.

Economic growth under Jagan's administration averaged 7.1% per year - the highest of any period in Guyana's recorded history



### Poverty Reduction Miracle

Accompanying this high and sustained growth was an unprecedented decline in the level of poverty and significant improvement in social services. The level of poverty declined by more than 40%, from an estimated 86% in 1991 to 35% in 1999. The infant mortality rate decreased by almost 17%, from 49.8 in 1991 to 41.4 in 1997. Even adult life expectancy – which usually takes decades to improve significantly – increased by 3%, reaching 63.4 years in 1997 from 61.2 years in 1991. These numbers are impressive by historical standards in Guyana and the Caribbean. The share of the population with access to safer drinking water, sanitation, immunization, and basic health care increased noticeably. In other words, economic growth delivered real improvement in living standards and the quality of life.

### Lessons for Current and Future Policymakers

Current and future policymakers who are serious about growing the economy and ending poverty can replicate the Jagan-era policies that have successfully delivered high and sustained economic growth, remarkable reductions in poverty, and meaningful advancement in social and human development. Jagan's policies worked because they prioritized the needs, hopes, and aspirations of citizens. It is not sufficient to just increase future national budget, but reprioritizing public spending to significantly invest in critical social services could



*Dr. Jagan's addressing Delegates and Observers at a Party's Congress*

achieve high and sustainable growth and deliver widespread prosperity to all Guyanese.

More specifically, public investments to improve access to quality public education, quality and affordable healthcare, clean and safe communities, affordable housing and modernize the country's public infrastructure are sure ways to attract private investment, create good-paying jobs, and grow the economy. Further, developing and adequately

funding poverty reduction programs targeting the most vulnerable families is necessary to ensure that the poor benefit from economic growth. Poverty reduction programs that provide direct food and nutrition support, cash support and access to job training are effective in lifting families out of poverty and helping them climb the economic ladder, strengthening the workforce and promoting long-term economic growth.



Dhanraj Singh is Executive Director of the Guyana Budget & Policy Institute. He holds an MBA with specialization in Finance and Investment from Lynn University, Florida. He also holds a M.Sc. in Political Economy from the London School of Economics and Political Sciences and a B.Sc. Degree in Economics from the University of Guyana. In 2012, Singh received the Overseas Development Institute Fellowship award and in 2016 became a member of the Golden Key International Honors Society.

# Small Country, Great Leader:

How Cheddi Jagan Rattled Britain and America, 1961-1964.



*Dr. Jagan ascending the stairs of Parliament*

Cheddi Jagan's outstanding contribution to politics and history has mostly been focused on domestic matters; that is, within Guyana. While there are a number of publications that have dealt with Jagan's entanglements with the external world, there is still tremendous scope for analysis of his active participation in international politics. With respect to the latter, much effort has been expended on demonstrating the ways in which Jagan was victimized by British and American interference. Yet, there is much more to the story. Perhaps what is not so well known, excepting to those directly involved, is that the U.K. and the United States were perturbed by Jagan as much as he was rightfully concerned about the massive interference in the politics of Guyana's drive towards independence. It took nothing less than a meeting between President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan at Birch Grove, U.K. on June 30, 1963, to finally devise a plan to 'deal' with the situation. This article provides only a glimpse of the complicated politics of Guyana's decolonization, and the brilliant role played by Cheddi Jagan. As you will see, and as many already know, Dr. Jagan was no passive victim of imperial domination. The scholarship on Guyana's international affairs needs to be more systematically studied, and the period 1961 through 1964 is of special interest.

International relations scholars routinely suggest that small countries do not matter. What they have routinely forgotten to add, however, is that great leaders even in small and distant lands have contributed to the making of world history. The case of Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana comes to mind. Cheddi, as he was called by the rich and the poor, by the local and the foreigner, and by friends and foes alike, led the small British colony out of the empire. And, as in practically all struggles for national independence and sovereignty, it was not easy. Guyana did not move from colonialism to national sovereignty the way in which sister Caribbean countries such as Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago transitioned. Instead, Jagan, the People's Progressive Party (PPP), and the

Guyanese people were buffeted by the suffocating winds of empire, late colonial intrigue, imperialist intervention, and the dastardly politics of the Cold War. As postcolonial scholars are now arguing in volumes, the Third World and its leaders were not simply responding to these forces that were pushing history backward. Rather, they were also, simultaneously, *setting* the pace and trajectory of historical development. Cheddi Jagan, the son of indentured servants, was a figure in this dialectic of decolonization.

While Jagan had a clear path to Guyana's independence and socio-economic development, the British and the Americans were unimaginably confused, and on many occasions admitted that they did not know what to do about Guyana. Despite his Marxism and socialism, Jagan was a democratically elected leader. British Guiana had already achieved what the West said they were fighting for in the Cold War. Jagan's clarity of purpose, combined with his dogged political tenacity, caused serious in-fighting at numerous levels for the United States and the United Kingdom, and even *between* the two Anglophilic partners, who were otherwise united since the British Guiana/Venezuela crisis of 1898, when the United States actually suspended the Monroe Doctrine and instead reconciled its interest with Britain on the basis of racial conviviality.

Ever since Prime Minister Winston Churchill had suspended the Guyana Constitution in 1953, followed by detention of Premier Jagan, (along with others including Janet Jagan, Martin Carter, Sydney King (later Eusi Kwayana), Ajdoha Singh, Rory Westmaas, and Bally Latchmansingh, the US and UK were suspicious not only of the Jagans, but of the PPP as a whole. The charge was that they were outside the ambit of Western imperial influence. While the U.K. and U.S. were skeptical of Jagan, the Guyanese electorate was the last arbiter, as they should be. The PPP bounced back after Churchill's rude constitutional behaviour, and Jagan became premier again in 1957.

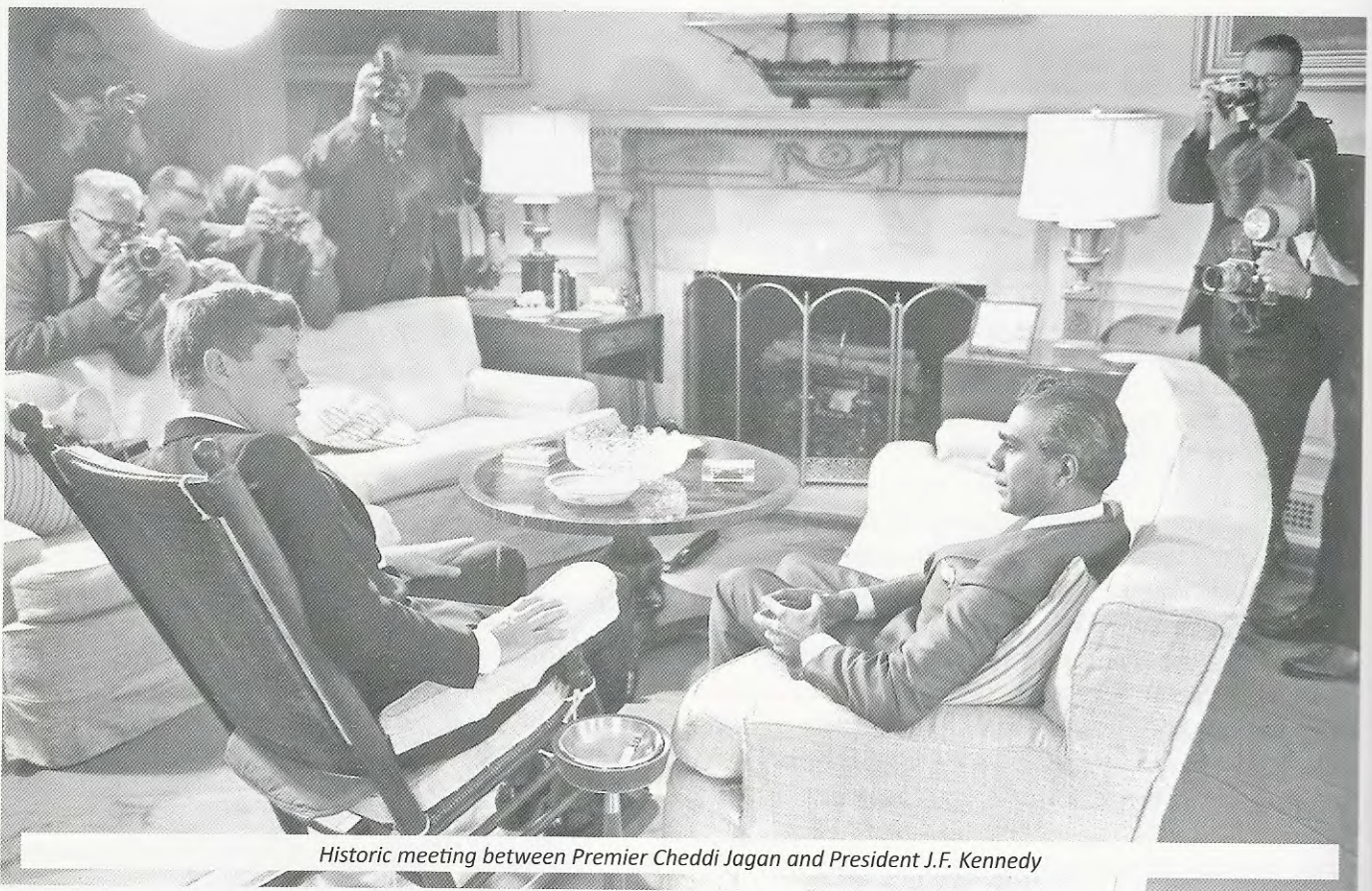
Jagan's courage would be hard to understand outside the extant moment in global history. At the same time, we should also recognize that developments in Guyana were part of a larger arch of history. Let us take a quick look at what was happening worldwide.

By the late 1950s, the Cold War was really heating up, and to make matters more complicated, the Cuban Revolution of July 1959 redrew global geopolitics



*Sir Ralph Grey handing over Certificate of Appointment as Premier to Cheddi Jagan*

along fault-lines that would last until 1989. Cuba quickly became a Soviet outpost, and moreover, the Revolution was attracting significant attention in Latin America. Two years before that, the Soviets had also launched Sputnik, an effort that translated into a deadly capability to strike the United States with nuclear weapons carried by Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). The British had their hands full with robust decolonization movements, some of them in the form of armed national liberation campaigns. Think of Malaysia and Kenya. The French, for their part, were trapped in a long and bloody war of liberation in Algeria, not to mention the ignominy suffered in Vietnam. At an even broader level, there was rising Third World discontent, with the East-West conflict; a fact definitively expressed at the Bandung Conference of 1955. At that Conference, an otherwise isolated China made a grand entrance on the world stage in the figure of Zhou Enlai, a development that troubled the United States. Beyond Bandung, leaders like India's Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indonesia's Sukarno, were already setting the stage for a third path outside the East-West conflict. This was the beginnings of the Non-Aligned Movement. In the Middle East, Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser was articulating a powerful message of anti-colonialism and Arab peoplehood. In Sub-Saharan Africa, leaders like Kwame Nkrumah were beginning to make their voices heard worldwide. In the United States, African Americans were deepening the long and historic struggle for freedom. In the meantime, being a keen student of world political developments, Cheddi Jagan became rightfully alarmed by the US interference in Guatemala and Iran in 1954. These were some



*Historic meeting between Premier Cheddi Jagan and President J.F. Kennedy*

of the considerations that were in play as Guyana approached the August 1961 election. In the months leading up to the election, major differences surfaced in the U.K. and U.S. about what to do.

The real problem, as the US saw it, was that if Guyana got independence under Jagan, the country would become a bridgehead for communism. In fact, it would leapfrog Cuba by establishing a pro-Soviet state on the South American mainland, from where it would be easier to penetrate other Latin American countries. The U.S. and U.K. were at odds on where to go, and what to do. There was no agreement on Jagan's ideological worldview; the timetable for Guyana's independence; the merits and demerits of removing Jagan and the PPP by proportional representation; levels of aid and who should pick up the tab; a replacement for Jagan; the timing and form of covert operations; the role of the OAS and Latin American states in reining in Jagan; and how the race card should be played by the U.S. and U.K. to divide Afro- and Indo-Guyanese.

The facts on the ground did not favour imperial intervention as report after report revealed. A U.S. Special Intelligence Estimate (March 21, 1961) is indicative of the uncertainty about Jagan. The

document titled "Prospects for British Guiana" stated that Jagan is not a communist and that he would not make major moves to shift Guyana outside the West. It did worry that he would adopt Afro-Asian "neutralism and anti-colonialism." Despite the determination that Jagan would not go pro-Soviet, the Intelligence Estimate left enough room that this might happen. The contradiction in the document is replicated through the period from 1961 until the PPP was finally removed from office in December 1964.

Space permits only one aspect of the infighting over what to do in Guyana. The US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was the most persistent advocate of removing Jagan, even if by covert means. On August 11, 1961, Rusk sent a telegram to the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Alexander Douglas-Home, making the case that if Cheddi and Janet Jagan won the upcoming election, it would "be a most troublesome setback in this hemisphere." He enquired if there was anything to "forestall the eventuality." Home's reply was polite but firm. He stated that the U.K. couldn't do much to interfere with the election, and further, if the US and Britain handled the matter responsibly, Guyana could transition to independence much like India.

The PPP won the election on August 21, 1961, with a comfortable majority. This sent Secretary of State Rusk into a frenzy. He immediately advised covert operations, and demanded that the British delay Guyana's independence by any means necessary. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., then Special Assistant to the President (John F. Kennedy), counseled that the US should offer technical assistance, prepare Guyana for entry into the OAS, and receive Premier Jagan at the White House. Yet, Schlesinger also advised that steps should be taken to root out communists in Guyana and that a replacement for Jagan should be considered. Jagan did visit the White House, where he made a case for development assistance and where he also again committed to democracy. By all accounts, it was a sober presentation. He asked for US\$ 5million. Nothing would come of it, and instead, the US did feasibility studies which themselves were not followed up or meaningfully implemented.

Rusk in the meantime hammered away at replacing Jagan. One of the biggest problems, for Rusk, often aired by Lord Home in the U.K., or more elliptically by Special Assistant Schlesinger Jr., was that there was no credible replacement for Jagan. Balram Singh Rai's name surfaced a few times, but he was considered not 'staunch' enough, and others were seen as incapable opportunists. The British generally held the view that Guyana would be worse off without Jagan, and this, despite his 'radical nationalism'. There was not much faith in the opposition bench.

Secretary of State Rusk kept up his campaign. His efforts were thought to be 'over the top,' and at one-time McGeorge Bundy recommended that Rusk be pulled back from talking to the U.K. about Guyana. Things got really heated in February 1962, when the Secretary of State fired off a letter to Lord Home demanding early elections based on PR. Home replied in ways that were on the verge of breaching protocol between opposite numbers at that level (top diplomats of the U.S. and U.K). In

a letter dated February 26, 1962, signed by Home, the U.S. Secretary of State was upbraided. Home wanted to know the grounds on which British Guiana should be made an exception to the American push for decolonization worldwide. More than that, and consistent with Jagan's view, the British Foreign Secretary chastised Rusk about implanting a fascist in Guatemala. On the question of removing Jagan, Home pointedly asked—, "How would you suggest that this can be done in a democracy?" — the democracy here being Guyana!

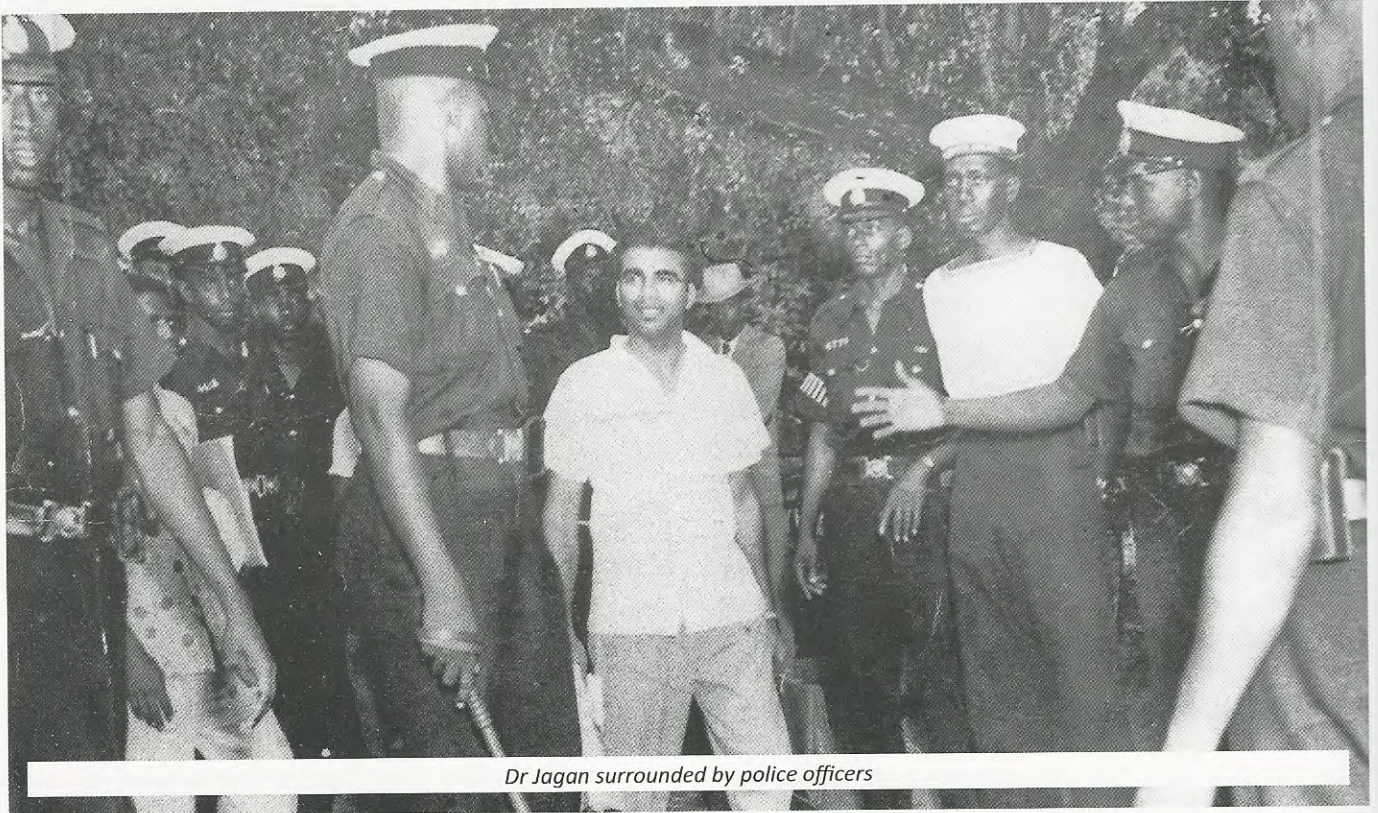
Alec Home was correct, but in the end, the Birch Grove meeting in 1963 produced what Rusk had always wanted. At that meeting, Duncan Sandys presented four options to Prime Minister Macmillan and President Kennedy. They were (1) continue the policy basically of muddling through; (2) give independence to Guyana under Jagan; (3) suspend the British Guiana Constitution as Winston Churchill had done back in 1953, or (4) establish a Burnham-D'Aguiar government and only then give independence.

The last option was chosen, and Jagan and the PPP were removed in December 1964. But history has its own ways of righting itself, not by any internal logic, but through hard work, discipline, courage, and the endless capacity to do the right things, even when against tremendous odds. This also happened. After Cheddi Jagan was removed from office, he kept up a long and determined struggle for Guyana's democracy and development. He sided with Mr. Burnham's government on a number of occasions, the most important being the policy of Critical Support. For that, he was roundly criticized, but he always defended the decision on the basis that Guyana's interest is more important than the interest of his political party. Cheddi Jagan waged a nearly three-decades-long campaign to recover his rightful place, and in October 1992, he was again elected President of the Republic of Guyana.



*Dr. Randolph B. Persaud is Associate Professor of International Relations at the American University in Washington D.C. He specializes in the areas of globalization, human security, post-colonialism, and the politics of identity. Before joining American University, he was Assistant Director for the Centre for International Security Studies (Toronto). At American University, he has served as the Interim-Director for the Council on the Americas and Director of Comparative and Regional Studies.*

# The Heroic Struggle of Jagan and Mandela



*Dr Jagan surrounded by police officers*

This year marks the centenary (March 1918-2018) of the birth of Dr. Cheddi Berret Jagan, Guyana and the Anglophone Caribbean's most famous freedom fighter against colonialism and political repression. Another freedom fighter was also born in 1918 – Nelson Mandela of South Africa. Both political figures have much in common and have been held in awe by millions worldwide because of their political imprisonment for fighting injustice. This article compares the political lives and heroic struggles of the two international Third World giants - a gesture in honour of the lives of both.

I have had the privilege of walking the picket line with Jagan, demanding free and fair elections in Guyana and the restoration of democratic governance. And I had the privilege to interview him several times for newspapers and magazines. He was very energetic,

intelligent and witty. He had a great sense of humour. I did not have the privilege to meet Mandela personally, though I visited the prison where he was kept and the Mandela Center, and I joined the international struggle to free him and to end the system of (de facto) apartheid rule in South Africa and Guyana. In fact, at a lecture in New York in 1989, Jagan referred to Burnham's system of governance as apartheid-like.

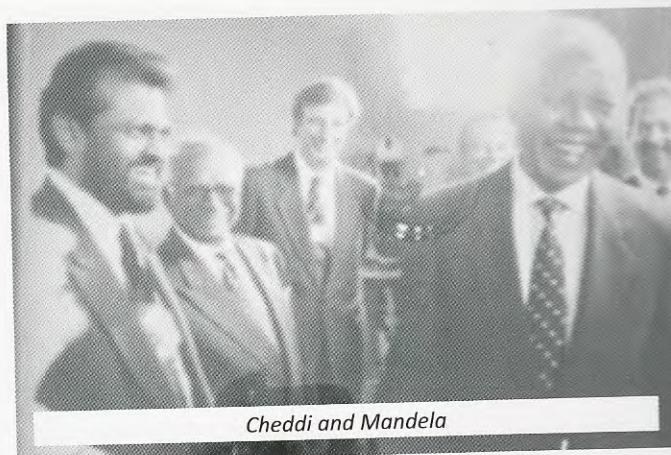
They both deserve glory. Both Mandela and Jagan were a rare breed of freedom fighters who walked the earth, belonging to the same category as other greats like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. They were both noble individuals, possessed of very high moral standards, and were an inspiration to all. They were heroes to the world, principled in their objectives to uplift the lives of their people, and

they fought for everyone in their nation. Jagan not only fought for all Guyanese but for all of humanity as well, while Mandela fought for all South Africans. Jagan and Mandela were natural leaders, whose talents were readily acknowledged not only by supporters but by opponents as well. And the two share an unearthly pattern as political freedom fighters – Jagan against colonialism and Burnhamist apartheid in Guyana and Mandela against White apartheid rule in South Africa. They both were politically exiled for almost three decades. Life for both was very hard, and over the years got worse. Prison conditions were very rough for Mandela, leading to loss of vision in one eye. Jagan was subjected to physical attacks by opponents of the PNC, which financed thugs to attack Jagan and his supporters physically. Their enduring strength of will to fight the political system that oppressed them and their people was remarkable, in that, for more than twenty-five years, there was little international pressure for ending their political exile, not even from the moralistic US and UK. The two fighters laboured on. Their iconic status led respectively to “The Release Mandela” campaign worldwide, and “the Free and Fair Election” campaign globally that became international cause celebre.

Among other similarities, they were honourable men who were imprisoned and/or cheated of office. They were unwilling to compromise their principles on people’s freedom just to enjoy office, thereby making them men of dignity, sincerity, and integrity. And they largely fought a peaceful struggle and never sought revenge against those who persecuted them. As such, they became Mahatma Gandhis in their own right, and fall in the same category with Martin Luther King.

As writers have noted, they both suffered years of abuse from racist political opponents. They both led defiant protest against oppressive authorities, got arrested, and imprisoned only to emerge as mythical figures in their countries.

They were born the same year (Jagan in March and Mandela in July 1918). Jagan died in 1997 while Mandela passed away in 2013. Mandela joined the ANC in 1943 and co-founded its Youth League in 1944. He led a massive non-violent protest against racism in 1952 building on his reputation as a leader. Jagan entered politics in 1943 and organized workers against their exploitation and racist British rule. He led a massive workers’ protest in 1948 (Enmore Martyrs March after colonial



*Cheddi and Mandela*

police opened fire killing and maiming many sugar workers) building on his reputation to stand up to injustice. Jagan, like Mandela, became a young militant leader.

Mandela entered politics in 1943 and voluntarily stepped down in 1999. Jagan entered politics around the same time after his return from the USA in April 1943 and remained active until his death in office in March 1997. Mandela went through the evolution of political leadership from youth leader of the African National Congress (borrowing its name from the Indian Congress Mahatma Gandhi formed in South Africa) to the leader of the ANC, which has ruled South Africa since 1994. Jagan became a political leader in his own right, jointly forming a political organization (Political Affairs Committee) in 1946 which was subsequently transformed into a political party (PPP) in 1950. Jagan also became a labour activist and later, a union leader. He contested and won a seat for parliament in 1947 with workers’ support.

Mandela won the first democratic elections in South Africa as President in 1994. Jagan won the first democratically organized elections in Guyana in 1992. Mandela served only a term in office and stood down for a second term. Jagan died in office some seven months short of completing a five-year term.

Like Mandela, Jagan was indisputably a true hero of immense proportions. Jagan is widely recognized as the founder of modern Guyana. He spent fifty-four years fighting for the downtrodden and working class in Guyana, and several more against racism in the USA. No personality has left a bigger mark on Guyana’s modern history than the late Cheddi Jagan, who was first elected to the national legislature in 1947. In fact, the history of Guyana since 1947 when Jagan was elected to Parliament has been the history



Nelson Mandela

of the Jagan's political life. Jagan served the nation as its first Chief Minister in 1953, the first Premier in 1961 and first democratically elected President in 1992.

Jagan was compared with the great freedom fighters Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi of India. In fact, Nehru was Jagan's hero, and Jagan modelled his struggle for Guyana's freedom and the working class after Nehru. Mandela was honoured with the Nehru Peace Prize for his Nehruvian qualities.

Jagan's supporters in Guyana referred to him as their "Mahatma." Mandela had great respect for and consistently praised, Gandhi-ji for starting the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. At the funeral for Jagan in March 1997, as a mark of respect to him, many called him "bapuji", the revered title of Gandhiji in India. But Jagan did not care for titles, recognition or for material things; he did not want to be seen as being above anyone, and as such he did not want to be called President or leader, only as "comrade" for

he felt everyone was equal to him. And every man, woman, and child in Guyana and those in the diaspora simply called him "Cheddi" or Comrade Cheddi.

Jagan shared several other features with Nelson Mandela. Both men were professionals in their own right – Dr. Jagan was a dentist by training and Mandela a lawyer – and they used their professional training to help people. And as others have pointed out, they could have earned a decent life by practicing their trade, but they opted instead for the rough and tough tumble of political life, to champion the freedom of their nations. This has placed them in the category of great men of history. They both lived under racist apartheid like regimes supported by the Western powers.

As the literature noted, the political problem for the Americans and British was how to respond to popular, charismatic figures like Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana, who were determined to liberate their people from oppressive rule. They both were imprisoned for a number of crimes – Mandela for fighting against apartheid, and Jagan for fighting the injustices of the white plantocracy and Burnhamism. They both faced personality and ideological clashes that tested their leadership and diplomatic skills in their homelands. Jagan liberated Guyana, and Mandela liberated South Africa. Jagan also tried to liberate Guyanese from poverty.

These two nationalist leaders fought against imperialism, racism, and economic injustice, but they were left-wingers, expressing or showing sympathy towards the revolutionary Socialist bloc of nations and this was anathema to the US and UK, both of which were determined to keep them far away from governing their nations. Both subscribed to the same political ideology as socialists. Mandela reportedly stated at his trial in 1963: "I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, my lord, if it needs to be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die." Jagan took a similar position as Mandela, refusing to back down from his ideals, unlike political opportunists like Burnham.

Mandela and Jagan were recognized for their work to liberate their countries from the racist rule. Honours piled up for both – honorary doctorates and national awards of other countries and

countless organizations. In 1979, the Government of India bestowed the Jawaharlal Nehru award upon Mandela, and university after university selected him for the receipt of honorary degrees. Jagan who was honoured by the South African governments and organizations like GOPIO.

The long years of imprisonment of Mandela and political exile of Jagan failed to break their faith that there was a spark of humanity which might be touched, even in the most brutal regimes like that of South Africa and PNC's Guyana, and even for bigoted individuals like Forbes Burnham and Ian Botha. After contacts with Botha by Mandela and Burnham by Jagan, the freedom fighters became convinced that a negotiated settlement to ending racist rule was possible. As books noted, for longer than the time **Mandela** was a political prisoner in South Africa, **Jagan** was kept in the political wilderness by the oppressive dictator Forbes Burnham, with support from Washington and London. Coincidentally, the US and UK supported the racist governments in South Africa and Guyana that kept Mandela and Jagan respectively in political exile. But both leaders refused conditions (including embracing political opportunists) offered to them by imperialist forces and racists to gain their freedom. The years of exile brought out their inner greatness, allowing them to use their skills as supremely adept conciliators. They took charge of their exile, refusing to make concessions for personal benefits until their country was free. They would both go free unconditionally – or not at all.

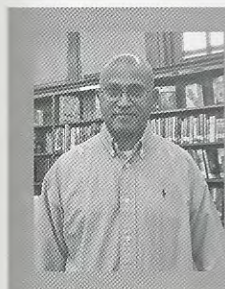
Their convictions for their beliefs were very strong and unshakeable. As writers noted, Mandela and Jagan both felt that life without dignity and equality was not worth living. They both shared the same philosophical outlook -- freedom, liberation, equality, and dignity of all, which for the two men, were worth far more than the accumulation of personal wealth or their own freedom. Both had one thing in common, and, that is, their ability to

put the interests of their people above their own self-interests, even if it meant being harassed and sent to jail or exile which they experienced for almost three decades. Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison and Jagan 28 years in political exile, plus some jail time. They both saw their apartheid regimes as being on the defensive. And they both recognized the world as being on their side against the injustice of racism and authoritarian rule. They both were convinced that the apartheid regimes would crumble and that one day their country would be free, and maybe they would rise to run the affairs of government.

As fate would have it, the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union in 1989 would soften the US and UK position on Mandela and Jagan. The US and UK would pressure their racist allies in South Africa and Guyana to liberalize politics and grant the men political freedom. This would eventually allow for the ascendancy of the popular Mandela and Jagan to come to power in 1994 and 1992 respectively. Mandela had the honour of becoming the first democratically-elected President of South Africa. The same could be said of Dr. Cheddi Jagan, who emerged to become the first democratically-elected President of Guyana. And in becoming Presidents, neither Mandela nor Jagan jailed anyone, or prosecuted anyone, or sought vengeance.

In government, they chose reconciliation over settling scores with their enemies who persecuted them. Mandela established the truth and reconciliation commission. Jagan was about to establish the truth and reconciliation commission in Guyana when he was struck down with a heart attack.

Jagan and Mandela would forever be remembered for their caring, humble, and compassionate behaviour in and out of office, and for dedicating their entire lives to the struggle against inequality and exploitation.



*Dr. Vishnu Bisram is a socio-political analyst and pollster. He played a significant role in the struggle for the restoration of democracy in Guyana in 1992. He travels widely and writes extensively on the Guyanese Diaspora.*

# A View from Outside:

**Dr. Cheddi B Jagan's Immeasurable Works and Legacy Live on!**



Writing as an "outsider," I know that it will be hard to do justice in a short essay on a man who had risen from the belly of the plantation system to become a towering political figure in Guyana, the Caribbean, and on the world stage. He stirred the consciousness and imagination of the masses and lifted them to new areas of possibilities (education, self-worth, independence, agriculture development, etc.), hitherto untraversed. His charisma and expertise allowed him to transcend barriers of religion, ethnicity, gender, rural-urban dichotomy, and social

background. He was well endowed to have become the leader of Guyana's nationalist movement, as well as Guyana's first Premier in 1953-1964, and then its first democratically elected President in 1992-1997.

While I had the opportunity to meet this great man but only twice, I kept abreast of his political path, strategies, setbacks, and achievements. My family members were ardent People's Progressive Party (PPP) supporters. In fact, 98% of the residents of my village of Canal No 1, West Bank Demerara, have been PPP supporters. My uncle, Eshwar Samaroo, would donate his bus to transport voters to polling booths in the village at election time. I knew Dr. Jagan's wife, Mrs. Janet Jagan. She wrote me a letter following the 1998 disturbances that were started by elements connected to the PNC, following its (PNC's) loss at the 1997 general elections. She thanked me for calling upon Guyanese to refrain from further violence, which could have driven us back 50 years and over, not to mention the prospect of accentuating the volatile ethnic divide. Any form of violence would make all of us (Guyanese), losers. The first time that I met Dr. C B Jagan was on the occasion of the 150th anniversary (1988) of the arrival of East Indians as immigrants in Guyana and the Caribbean. The venue was in Richmond Hill, Queens, New York, and it was sponsored by the Indian Diaspora Committee (IDC). Four years later, in 1992, I was re-introduced to Dr Jagan by Dr Prem Misir at a PPP public meeting at the Cheddi Jagan Square on Liberty Avenue that was anxious to hear of developments regarding free and fair elections in 1992, after 28 years of People's National Congress's (PNC's) fraudulent elections and authoritarian rule.

As a little boy, I used to attend PPP political meetings as well as other political parties' meetings along with my elders in the village, not knowing what all the huge fuss was about. I was not enthralled by



the political proceedings but was rather interested in the people's behaviour, including their shouts of approval and their other displays of satisfaction or rejection of ideas. It was a kind of community gathering, something that did not happen frequently in my village, except at weddings and funerals. However, I did pay keen attention to Dr. Jagan's speech, but not for its contents, but rather for his fiery oratory, his passion, and his capacity to connect with the people. He would always animate the crowd which would spontaneously erupt into thunderous applause.

The people of my village, as elsewhere, revered Dr. Jagan and his wife, Janet Jagan. I recall that at Leonora, West Coast Demerara in the early 1960s, where a public PPP meeting was scheduled, I, for the first time, ventured out of my village and joined a few friends and rode on our bicycles for 5 miles through the Leonora estate mud-dam to attend that meeting. Leonora has been a PPP stronghold, and as expected, the crowd was huge. There, one of my villagers, Davindra, rendered a song (that he wrote) in which he literally immortalized Dr. Jagan. The crowd went wild with his rendition. I also

recall that those were the days when politics had captured the imagination of the Guyanese people. From 1964 onwards, the majority of Guyanese's excitement for politics diminished significantly with the onset of authoritarian rule by the PNC, and the attendant rise of ethno-politics that has dominated the political landscape ever since.

I can only briefly touch upon a few significant events under Dr. Jagan's leadership. Once in office, Dr. Jagan found that governance in the 1950s and early 1960s was stultifying. He said, for example, that he was in position but not in power. But despite constitutional restraints, including limited ministerial authority, Dr. Jagan never gave up on his struggle for a better Guyana. His indomitable spirit allowed him to fight hard and relentlessly to take the country into independence, but he was denied that opportunity through a conspiracy hatched by the British and the Americans. This plot unfolded vividly at the 1963 London Constitutional Talks and at the 1965 Independence Conference (to set a date for independence). The result was that the PNC's LFS Burnham was given the "honour" to take the country into independence. That was one

of the gravest wrongs committed by the British Government, for which they should apologize.

Having been ousted from power in 1953 (after only 133 days) and again in 1964 (through the British –American plot), Dr. Jagan has always been regarded as the foremost Guyanese political leader, who fought gallantly, along with others, to restore democracy in Guyana. Ironically, it was the Americans who had allowed the dictatorship to prevail in Guyana for 28 years with the tacit support of CARICOM who eventually worked, through the Carter Center, to restore democracy in 1992. What role will the Americans play in the 2020 general elections and beyond?

Dr. Jagan's vision was not impaired by those and other disappointments; he remained unflappable. His philosophy of putting "country first" had allowed him to advance a number of projects during the 1957-1964, period to provide for the disadvantaged a better life which had always been central to his political mission. Thus, he launched several agricultural development schemes, such as Black Bush Polder and Boerasirie Extension Project. The University of Guyana was established in 1963, a project which opposition forces cynically called "Jagan Night School." It was because of Dr. Jagan's vision that I, and thousands of other students, have been able to secure a university education, which would probably never have happened had it not been for his struggle in this regard. Another of his education reforms had been the nationalization of denominational-run schools. This move also helped to remove catechism or Christian indoctrination at schools.

A major political centerpiece was his steadfast quest for a New Global Human Order (NGHO) when he criticized the inadequacy of existing concepts of humanitarianism. Dr. Jagan's persistence caused the United Nations General Assembly, in 2000, to adopt Guyana's resolution on the promotion of the "New Global Human Order." As an offshoot of his NGHO's striving, Dr. Jagan was able to secure "debt forgiveness" from the Paris Club and from other lending agencies, including the Trinidad & Tobago Government. I recall that Dr. Jagan advanced the view at a public meeting that if developed countries could only set aside  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1% of their military budget, and donate that sum to developing poor



countries, it would make such a huge difference in poverty reduction. The theme embodied in these declarations for a fairer distribution of resources was picked up by former President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, who has now been regarded as a champion of the earth for his work on sustainable development and climate change. Jagdeo's LCDS (Low Carbon Development Strategy) initiative is now a recognized international model which also allows Guyana to benefit financially.

"Guyana first" had always been uppermost in Dr. Jagan's political calculus. When the PPP re-gained power in 1992, the then Minister of Finance wanted to investigate the alleged corruption of the PNC operatives, including the non-accountability regime at National Coop Bank, where it was alleged that billions of dollars were siphoned off into corruption. In the pursuit to track down the perpetrators, the Senior Finance Minister said that he was stopped in his track by President Jagan. He was instructed instead to focus of restoring the bankrupt economy into solvency, and not to open up new racial wounds.

Dr. Jagan did not believe in political recrimination, as some people do within the coalition. Dr. Jagan puts principles and country first before anything else. When Burnham nationalized sugar in 1975-76, Dr. Jagan rendered "critical support." Likewise, at the London constitutional talks in 1963 and 1965, rather than causing a deadlock, Dr. Jagan agreed to allow the Colonial Secretary to arbitrate on the constitutional issues, including the type of electoral system. Duncan Sandys introduced PR (proportional Representation) to replace first-past-the-post system. Jagan was disappointed in that decision and expressed his disenchantment by stating that he thought that the British would have been guided by Commonwealth precedents and British parliamentary practices. He learnt that the British have not always been about justice, as Gandhi had also learnt.

On March 22, 2018, Dr. Jagan would have been 100 years. On the occasion of his 100th birth anniversary, we cannot praise him enough for the critical role he had played in the elevation of our social consciousness and providing for a better a life for all Guyanese. The man's bigger than life's stature had also been reflected by his massive funeral in Guyana (1997). What Dr. Jagan might have done differently had the sugar crisis emerged during his active political life? His political insights and career were born out of the sugar estate experience. His legacy as a champion of all workers, including sugar as well as his statesmanlike approach to politics, will never die. Dr. Jagan lives on through his incalculable good works and sound ideas. The Cheddi Jagan Research Center (CJRC) will continue to solidify his legacy.

As one of Guyana's leading visionary, Dr. Jagan was also the "first among equals;" and was a walking encyclopedia. He embraced, practiced, and preached about transparency, accountability, integrity, professionalism, respect for the rule of law and the constitution, including the separation of powers. He believed passionately that development must lift people out of poverty and distress, and must also provide equality of opportunity. Dr. Jagan would always plead for politicians to rise above party politics in the interest of national development and racial harmony, among other things.

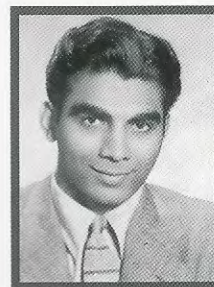
What's of significance are the numerous qualities cited above that Dr. Jagan embraced and practiced, and not necessarily any kind of "ism." His governance style attested to this position. He is one of the greatest Guyanese and Caribbean statesmen.



*Tara Singh was born in Canal No 1, West Bank Demerara. He was educated at the University of Guyana (UG) and the University of Wales. He was a former Senior Lecturer at UG and holds a few Academic Distinctions, including the Senior Commonwealth Scholar Award and the Fullbright Scholar Award.*

*He is the founder and former President of the well known medical and humanitarian organization, Guyana Watch, Inc. He is currently the President of the NGO called New York Guyana Medical and Humanitarian Mission ((NYGM).*

# Biographical Summary of Dr. Cheddi Jagan



1. **Name:** Cheddi Berret Jagan
2. **Date of Birth:** March 22, 1918. Port Mourant, Corentyne, Berbice, Guyana
3. **Died** March 6, 1997
4. **Parents:** Son of indentured plantation workers; mother (Bachaoni) and father (Jagan) along with two grand mothers and an uncle came to the then British Guiana from Uttar Pradesh, India.
5. **Personal:** Married August 5, 1943, to Janet Rosenberg of Chicago, Illinois USA; has two children: Cheddi (Joey) and Nadira
6. **EDUCATION:**
  - 1933-1935: Queen's College, Georgetown
  - 1936-1938: Howard University, Washington, D.C. USA
  - 1938-1942: Northwestern University, Dental School, Chicago,
  - USA, Doctor Dental Surgery (DDS)
  - 1938-1942: Central YMCA College, USA. Bachelor of Science (B.Sc)
7. **TRADE UNION AND POLITICAL CAREER:**
  - 1946: Organised and spearheaded the formation of the Political Affairs Committee and the PAC Bulletin.
  - 1947-1953: Elected Member of the Legislative Council
  - 1950: Founded the People's Progressive Party.
  - 1952-1953: President of the Rice Producers' Association.
  - 1953: From April to October, headed PPP elected Government and was Minister of Agriculture
  - 1954: spent 6 months in jail for breaking movement restrictions order.
  - 1957-1961: Headed second elected PPP Government and was Minister of Trade and Industry.
  - 1961-1964: Headed the third elected PPP Government as Premier and Minister of Development and Planning.
  - 1964-1973, 1976-1992: Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition.
  - 1970-1997: Honorary President, Guyana Agricultural General Worker's Union; General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party.
  - Oct. 9, 1992-March 6, 1997: President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.