

Remembering Cheddi - March 2004

by Janet Jagan

It was, as before, a grand occasion and unforgettable. Thousands gathered at Babu John, Port Mourant on Friday, March 5, 2004 to celebrate the life of the late President of Guyana and General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party, Cheddi Jagan.

They came from all over the Corentyne and as far away as Linden. Many walked the long road into Babu John in the burning sun, at its hottest around 2-3 pm on that cloudless Friday. Among the thousands who by the way, unconcerned about the foolish call by Kaitour News to boycott the ceremony, were many of the Party stalwarts who have stood by their Party for decades. There they were, many now old and/or ill, and many of the younger Party activists, full of vigour and commitment to their Party and attending to acknowledge their love and faith in their leader of a half century, Cheddi Jagan.

The ceremony began with the laying of wreaths and flowers at the place of Cheddi Jagan's cremation in March 1997, now a beautiful monument to this great and beloved Guyanese. I brought from home a spray of yellow orchids to lay on the monument, flowers which are blooming from plants Cheddi lovingly grew. When not hard at work, which was greatly limited, he loved working in his yard, planting fruit trees and flowers. He immensely enjoyed this form of relaxation.

In between the speeches were very impressive cultural items. Those who planned the programme, built the stage and the area for the seated audience and decorated the area are to be praised for their achievements. Everything was perfect and showed the love and devotion of those who laboured to make the occasion a success.

Three youths read passages from Dr Jagan's "West on Trial." Very appropriate! There was an item of Tassa drumming and African drumming. Twice the talented singer Gordon Lewis sang very moving songs of his own creation about Cheddi Jagan. Many wept at his song about Cheddi's life.

Speakers included General Secretary of the PPP Donald Ramotar, two-times PPP Minister Brindley Benn, Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, President Bharrat Jagdeo and myself. All were well received and all told an aspect of the life of Cheddi Jagan.

When we remember Cheddi, we must also remember, aside from all he did in his public life, the ideas and concepts he expressed in his unbelievably prolific writings. He had written many books and articles in his lifetime, notably "Forbidden Freedom" after the 1953 suspension of the Guyana Constitution and "West on Trial," written immediately after he was forced out of office in 1964 as a result of the coalition of the US and UK, bent on denying him office during independence.

Since his death, many other publications of his writings have been printed, the most notable being "Cheddi Jagan: My Fight For Guyana's Freedom," reflections on her father by my daughter Nadira Jagan-Brancier. This beautiful book with over 350 photographs of Dr Jagan, was her loving tribute to the father she adored. She also edited and published "A New Global Human Order," knowing how strongly her father felt on this subject. In fact, she did two printings of this worthwhile book.

I am fortunate to have a daughter who has not only published and promoted his books, but she spends much time going through his papers as well as establishing and maintaining a website known as Cheddi Jagan - Guyana's hero - <http://jagan.org>. I invite all readers to check into this remarkable website and learn more about Cheddi Jagan.

Also Nadira and others have been responsible for the establishment of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre at Red House, which is one of the greatest tributes to this outstanding man.

New books are constantly being published, the latest which was launched at Red House last December, compiled and edited by Dr David Dabydeen, assisted by the Centre's able archivist Mr Dudley Kissoore, consists of correspondence by Dr Jagan over the period of the 1940's to the 1960's. Also being prepared for yet another printing is "West on Trial" which his daughter Nadira is working on right now.

All over Guyana, from the Interior and along the coastal belt, commemorative activities are taking place this month, under the banner: "Remembering Cheddi." Active in this are the youth and women's organizations which he helped build and nurture and leading stalwarts of the Party he built.

All are involved and all remember Cheddi and pledge to further the ideals for which he stood!

Copyright © Nadira Jagan-Brancier 2009